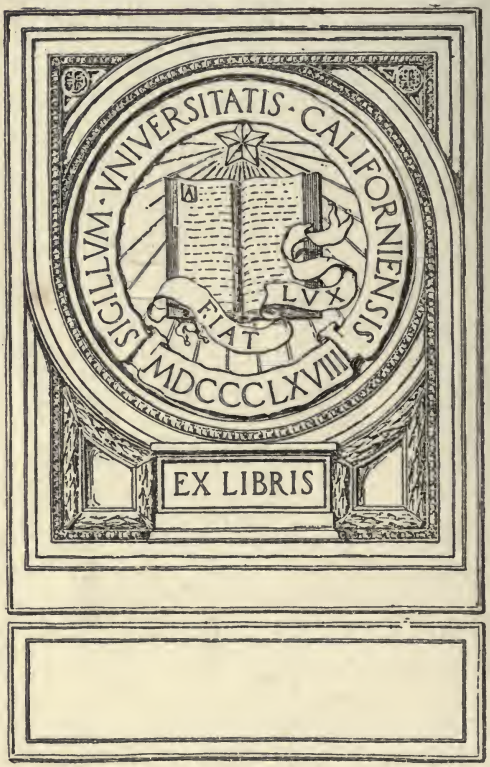
My French Year

By Constance Elizabeth Maud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MY FRENCH YEAR

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

AN ENGLISH GIRL IN PARIS
MY FRENCH FRIENDS
FELICITY IN FRANCE
A DAUGHTER OF FRANCE
MISTRAL'S MEMOIRS. (From the French. With a Preface by the Translator)
ANGÈLIQUE (LE P'TIT CHOU)
THE RISING GENERATION
NO SURRENDER

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

WAGNER'S HEROES
WAGNER'S HEROINES
HEROINES OF POETRY
SHAKESPEARE'S STORIES. (In collaboration with MARY MAUD)

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

MARSHALS JOFFRE AND FOCH LEADING TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

MY FRENCH YEAR

BY

CONSTANCE ELIZABETH MAUD

AUTHOR OF

'AN ENGLISH GIRL IN PARIS,' 'A DAUGHTER OF FRANCE,' ETC. ETC.

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

MY THREE FRENCH FRIENDS

MADAME DERODE

(*née* TOURANGIN)

MADAME BOISSIÈRE

(*née* ROUMANILLE)

MRS H. FLOYD

(*née* DE NEUFVILLE)

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK, WITH THE HOPE THAT IT MAY BE AN ADDED LINK IN THE 'ENTENTE CORDIALE'

446728

PREFACE

In bygone days I have known and loved my French friends in the happy times of Peace—times which now seem to belong to a past as remote as the days of Greece, when the Gods dwelt on Olympus and nymphs and shepherds danced to the pipes of Pan. But the love and sympathy which had grown up with me from childhood, and which I felt, as one united by far-back ties of race and kindred, has deepened immeasurably with every year of the War.

For in the supreme ordeal my French friends have shown themselves at their finest, their noblest, their sublimest. To those of us who had the happiness of knowing France and the French this has been no surprise. We always knew that the roots went down very deep of that fair flower of French character which showed so gay, so fine a wit, so happy a facing of life, so brave and buoyant a spirit in adversity. But there were those, and they were the British nation as a whole, who judged the French with as little true psychology as they judged the Germans, whose war-books planned so neatly the occupation and subjugation of France in less than three months, keeping Christmas in Paris—such a happy German Christmas! To find the light-hearted, "frivolous"

French more serious, grim and purposeful than any Scotsman, tenacious as the English bulldog himself, enduring as the miners of Durham or Yorkshire. This has been a revelation to their neighbours across the Channel. And French women no less than their men have shown these fundamental qualities of strength, courage, endurance and steadfastness, together with a cheerfulness which never failed. At the call of their country the women of France arose in the selfsame hour as the men. The President appealed to them to mobilise for National Service the week that War was declared. How they answered the call has been shown during the long drawn-out years of the most fiery ordeal through which any nation has ever passed.

. . . . . .

From the first my friends in France kept me in touch with their lives. Those letters—what a record they were of the wonderful spirit animating France! Many of them, alas too soon, came edged with the deep border of black announcing the death of husband—son—brother—*mort pour la patrie.* But it was not till the autumn of 1917, when I went to France as a delegate of the Croix Rouge Britannique, that I saw, with my own eyes, France in the Great War.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

MY FRENCH YEAR

PART I

MY PASSPORT

It was August (1917) when my passport photograph was taken, but red-tape required from five to six weeks before all its tortuous intricacies were unwound. For it was not only English red-tape but an interwoven skein of English and French with which I had to grapple, a combination enough to make an ordinary brain to reel and heart to quail.

Many weary times I trod the well-worn road to Bedford Square to interview "Jacks in office," big and little. At last came the really final visit. Having passed safely before what I had been led to believe were the Supreme Authorities I learnt to my dismay my troubles were not over, and was directed to a table where sat three sombre, pre-occupied looking gentlemen, there to show my passport, "ordre de mission," etc., and obtain their stamped approval. These Three, "drest in the little brief authority" of the Three Fates, had just been dealing with a gentleman of such dignified and withal impeccable appearance, a passport seemed almost superfluous. But the Three were

not to be deceived by the camouflage of a mere outside, they dispatched him with a parting reprimand suitable to a detected impostor. He uttered no rejoinder, but gathering up his papers fled—was it guiltily?—from the place.

This was not reassuring. If such an one had been found wanting, how should I fare with my mission to the French war zone, for which it was essential my journey should be viâ Boulogne—that jealously guarded route. I handed my papers to the male Clotho with a finely indifferent air, but beating heart. He levied small suspicious eyes upon me, and then upon my passport.

"Is Maud a surname?" he began searchingly. I assured him in my most conciliatory tones that it was, and he would find this borne out by the Army List and Clergy List, not to mention Madame Tussaud. After reading my passport and punctuating his study with snorts of disapproval, which filled me with an apprehension only experienced by the innocent, he suddenly fixed me with a penetrating gaze and asked: "Is this your photograph—a recent one?" I wondered where the doubt came in, whether he considered it erred on the side of flattery or the reverse, but mindful that any extraneous remark might be used against me, I replied reassuringly, "It is mine, taken a month ago——" and nearly added before the ageing experience of getting a passport.

He gave a reluctant stamp and passed the

papers to his collaborator, already lying in wait to seize the frail thread of my fate. The precious little blue paper from Paris roused his instant suspicions :

" What has this got to do with the passport ? " he asked sharply.

" That is my ' ordre de mission ' for the French war zone," I explained. " It is from the French Foreign Office to the Croix Rouge in London." Again he inspected my passport. What his train of thought was I could not divine, but suddenly he pounced again :

" *Where* were you born ? " he asked in a tone that reminded me of the game we played as children called " Earth, air, fire and water," and automatically I was replying with the old lightning rapidity, " Water," when I pulled up in time with, " Brighton." There is something evidently reassuring about Brighton ; to my surprised relief he bestowed the decisive stamp and I was now safely past both Clotho and Lachesis. But Atropos remained. As he drew my papers before him his attention became suddenly fixed like that of a setter who has found the scent.

" Why is this made out viâ Boulogne I should like to know ? " he demanded in hectoring tones.

" Because that is the nearest point to the country I wish to visit," I replied pleasantly.

" I'm by no means satisfied with *that* reason," he sneered. My heart stood still. I saw my six

weeks' toil wasted—the stone rolling to the bottom of the hill—my task to begin all over again. Fortunately, however, Lachesis interposed at this juncture for, having passed me himself, he was not going to have any reflections cast upon his judgment by his brother Fates. He pointed to the "ordre de mission" and an altercation took place, during which I kept a discreet silence.

"It is not in order—I am by no means satisfied," maintained Atropos. At this moment a high personage passed and Lachesis appealed to him. Three heads bent over the blue French paper—the suspense was acute. Other people were waiting to be stamped—someone mentioned it was nearly one o'clock. The Daniel called to judgment looked up sharply: "Then I must be off," he said. "Oh that's all right," to the Fates, "you can pass it." With a cheerful smile at me he was gone. My choicest blessing following him to that happy lunch party!

Shorn of his scissors by this Jupiter-Daniel, with an air of gloomy foreboding Atropos gave the third necessary stamp. I snatched up my papers and escaped into the fresh air where I drew a deep breath, wondering why such invaluable material as went to the make-up of the fateful Trio should be thrown away on straight-forward British passports, when with their endowments they might be turned on to ridding this poor infested country of the Hun and Hunins who still swarmed in every corner and on every coast where they ought not to be.

THE CROSSING

Charing Cross station. No luggage except what could be carried by hand. It is remarkable, however, what some people manage to take with them under this restriction, thanks to the assistance of other people's hands.

The station was crowded with khaki, officers and men, with nurses, V.A.D.'s and canteen workers for the Church Army and Y.M.C.A. huts. One lady with bright, eager face, wearing the badge of the Y.M.C.A., was saying good-bye to her husband. He stood by the carriage door and announced to us all in firm tones that he "utterly disapproved of it."

"It's only for four months, Arthur, dear," said the bright-eyed little lady, laying a soothing hand on his. He turned to her companion, another Y.M.C.A.:

"What business has a married woman to leave her home for four months? It is a preposterous idea I maintain."

"Oh! well you see . . ." began the friend.

"Arthur, darling," interposed his wife leaning out of the carriage. "I beg you don't talk like that—it's so unpatriotic. Remember I must do my bit like you and everybody else."

"Your bit!" Arthur gave a short bitter laugh. "Well you women are the limit. It's all very well for Miss Smith, but here you are with a husband and five small children left to shift for themselves, while you hook off to France for four months to do your bit. Who's going to do your bit at home I'd like to know?"

"Only for four little months, Arthur, darling! And I'll write every day." The little hand stroked his.

"Well I utterly and entirely disapprove of the whole thing, Miss Smith," reiterated Arthur, withdrawing his hand from the soothing stroke. They had no time for more, we were already moving, and with that parting malediction the train whirled away the bright-eyed little mother of five deserted babies to do "her bit" serving hot coffee and buns to British Tommies in a Y.M.C.A. hut at Étaples.

There was an hour to wait before we were allowed on board at Dover, so I sat on the quay with the canteen ladies and watched the troops march past to the three transports sailing with us. Six thousand of them, some fresh recruits, boys with pink and white cheeks like girls, but the vast majority well-seasoned soldiers carrying battered helmets, and wearing war-stained uniforms. English, Irish, Scots, kilted Highlanders, Anzacs, a sprinkling of dark-faced Maories with gleaming white teeth shown in a wide smile; here and there a Flying man with keen bird-like face and far-seeing eyes.

All looked cheerful, and many sang snatches of popular trench songs—"Back to Blighty" and "Little Grey Home."

Some as they passed smiled and said "Good-bye." I answered, "Good luck, we're crossing too."

The little Y.M.C.A. lady added, "See you again at the canteen." This produced such merriment: she tried it several times.

The New Zealanders were much the finest specimens of manhood, tall and fit, bronzed by the sun, supple and muscular, walking as though fatigue were unknown to them, yet with nothing of the machine-drilled air of the big Uhlan, the pride of the German Army, who in the good old days always turned one off the pavement in his native city. The little British Tommies, the men of Kent and Middlesex, even the town bred Cockney, looked sturdy, wiry, and well-toughened by their two years', some three years', service in France. But the fresh recruits, mostly boys in their 'teens, gave one to think—furiously to think. We heard many of these had only had three or four months' training.

"Oh! the pity of it!" sighed Miss Smith, "they are only schoolboys!"

"Yes," agreed a grey-haired official standing near, "that's the evil result of the voluntary system, that's what these lads are paying for—they didn't dare look at their birth certificates while the others hung back. They just had to take 'em——"

One thing was noticeable—their good spirits had

nothing "Dutch" about them. In all the long procession of six thousand there was only one who did not walk quite straight, and he poor fellow was no doubt just recovering from influenza.

By five o'clock we were off. The sky had clouded over and a stiff wind blew, but I fled from the stifling cabin reserved for me on the lower deck, the floor of which was entirely covered with troops sitting tightly packed together. Upstairs I found my baggage and made a seat of it, till a kind blue-eyed seaman brought me a deck-chair just in time to prevent a fall from this most insecure perch. The deck was crowded with officers, great and small, from the General with his golden oakleaves to the newly fledged "sub." Here and there might be seen a small knot of women and girls, each wearing some distinctive badge of national service. Three sturdy little khaki-clad girls stood the whole time leaning over the rail laughing and talking eagerly while a row of pale, spectacled youths in the civilian garb which struck so false a note in those days, sat near them firmly glued to their raft chairs, rugs tucked round their knees, evidently conscientiously objecting to offering their seats to a woman. They were a strange contrast to the breezy young girls and the vigorous bronzed men in uniform who surrounded them. I wondered what subterranean strings they had pulled to get their papers made out viâ Boulogne by the three Fates of Bedford Square.

Everyone was obliged to put on life-belts, if you

can so call the strange cubical object which is fastened round your neck like a chest preserver, both back and front. It entirely precludes any position of ease or rest to the head, and I could imagine nothing more unpleasant than having this incubus around one in the water, indefinitely prolonging a very trying situation. I reasoned that wearing this must be an optional affair. But a stern voice roused me :

"Madam, you must put on your life-belt." I explained my views about life-belts. He smiled grimly. "That's not the point, you see. Some one might risk a valuable life trying to save you whether you wished it or no."

This was unanswerable and I hastened to put my head through the collar, my admonitor kindly assisting me to fasten the strings and seeing to it that they were firmly done. I felt as though the Scavenger's Daughter had me in her grip.

. . . . . .

Gradually the daylight faded. The queer-shaped figures and their piled-up luggage all mingled in fantastic outlines. The officers of the watch and the man high up in the crow's nest kept constant look-out on the grey waters, out of which any moment might start up the Boche's periscope.

On either side of us kept pace a destroyer and we were accompanied besides by two other troopships, each with their freight of some two thousand men, and an empty returning hospital ship. We passed

patrol vessels now and then with their friendly lights; and once a large lumber boat loomed up in the twilight, appearing stationary, we were going so fast in comparison. The boats on our steamer were made ready for lowering at a moment's notice, and all the deck chairs were fitted with rafts. One felt the cold water very near, yet without any disturbing fears. Such small emotions found no soil in which to grow in those big days.

BOULOGNE

Boulogne at last. The darkness had fallen as we slowly threaded our way up the long winding quay crowded with vessels of every description. The rain had begun in good earnest with our arrival, adding umbrellas to the general confusion of disembarking. I came to the rescue of the two canteen ladies whom I found struggling desperately with a very limited vocabulary, never before put to a real test with French officials—the latter wonderfully amiable —mellowed by the war and our Entente no doubt. A telegram announcing their arrival to the headquarters of the Y.M.C.A. was found reposing in Miss Smith's lunch basket. They had lost the last train to Étaples, and had no alternative but to spend the night in Boulogne.

As there was no train for my destination till next morning, we threw in our lot together and, hiring a fiacre, started on a search for rooms. Beginning with the Hôtel Devereux we made the grand tour, while the rain made sport of us in our half-sheltered conveyance. From one door to another we drove in vain. "In the whole cityful rooms there were none!" A bench at the station loomed ahead as our only prospect of rest that night. I appealed,

with the rain running down my face, to Madame la Propriétaire of our last frustrated hope—her predecessors had been too curt to encourage any hope of assistance, but her cheery face bespeaking initiative and energy gave promise of a kind heart also.

"Could she offer any suggestion? Our case was desperate—pitiable," I pleaded.

She viewed us seriously, as a medical man the patient who has come to him six months too late for effective treatment, but her brain sought rapidly for relief in palliatives.

"Ah! Mesdames, see you, Boulogne, it is crowded to that point one may truly say there is not a chink to admit a sardine. For a room one must give one week, two weeks' notice. But hold! I will ask my sister-in-law, she at the *caisse*. It is just possible that she may know of a little hole somewhere in the town." And away bustled the kindly little woman to return shortly with an address scribbled on a piece of paper.

"Let these ladies try here," she said hopefully. "This is the cousin of my sister-in-law. She has two or three nice rooms, which to increase her *rentes* she occasionally lets to boarders. It is possible she may have one vacant where she could squeeze these ladies for the night. If they mention the name of Madame Troulard be sure she will do her utmost possible for our English allies," she added cordially.

Again we plunged into the dark wet streets, the

rain slashing at us viciously under the hood of our fiacre.

"It is long past the time for my horse to sup—me also!" remarked our driver in gloomy tones as he was directed to the new address. Feeling the justice of his complaint and our desperate situation I promised him a "supplément," a "bonne main," "un bon pourboire," a life pension if he would make this last effort, and added his horse also should be richly rewarded; if this journey failed, the next would be only to the station waiting-room.

The horse had evidently been trained at Elberfeldt where M. Maeterlinck tells us they learn the language of men, for hearing this he started off with the utmost cheerfulness, and we were soon presenting our paper to two pleasant ladies, a mother and daughter. The magic name of Madame Troulard opened to us a small room *au troisième* wherein we found an enormous bed and a sofa at the foot, which furniture fitted the room as a walnut its shell.

This, Hélas! was all *Maman* could do for us, explained the daughter. Could we arrange ourselves?

With the station bench as the alternative and the rain hissing on the quay outside, we answered in a grateful chorus that we could arrange ourselves admirably.

Miss Smith's spirits went up with a bound. "I have been thinking of your husband," she said to her friend, "how terribly anxious he would be if

he could have seen you dripping wet and going from door to door seeking shelter in vain."

"Anxious!" laughed the mother of five, "not a bit of it. Arthur would chortle with glee and say 'Serves you right.' Don't you ever tell him about this first night, Adela—I trust to your honour."

"I shan't tell him—he would only blame me. I have noticed what cowards married men are," said Adela.

"Je suis très faim," remarked the bright-eyed lady emphatically to our landlady's daughter, and we all turned to her appealingly.

"Hélas! Mesdames, *Maman*, she cannot nourish these ladies," she replied regretfully. "Since the war *Maman* and me we make the kitchen ourselves, and the little *bonne* she makes the *ménage*. But these ladies can eat at the restaurant at the corner. One eats very well there."

We found this true. The war had raised prices, but it had not produced the extraordinary deterioration in every article of food as in England. Bread we found was still bread, though darker in colour. Butter was real butter, not the soft greasy stuff, oozing drops of water, which passed for the same in England, while cheese remained cheese instead of soap masquerading as such. The hand of the chef had not lost his cunning, and even at this small restaurant of the people the food was as well cooked as at Prince's.

Our upper chamber looked over the quay—a busy

scene of ships and motor transports. The night was as lively as the day. Not much sleep to be got, though I had no fault to find with my " canapé."

Next morning we looked out on a bright sun and wind-swept streets. From our windows we could see the German prisoners, a red band on their caps and large P.G. on their backs (" Prisonniers de Guerre "), working on the barges in the quay waters, a fence round the edge to prevent their landing. Viewed afterwards more closely the type of face struck one in marked contrast to the French—coarser and more elementary. They looked well fed and well clothed, but were slow and surly in their movements, which perhaps was hardly surprising, as no doubt they had heard of their more fortunate comrades taken to England, that Paradise of the Hun, where they led, at all events at first, if they so desired, a life of " dolce far niente " in pleasant internment camps flowing with milk and cheese, and liberal rations of bread and meat. In France the P.G. did not stand for Privileged Guest but " Prisoner of War," an ever-present fact of stern import to the Boche. And he did not like it, after being promised that he should be in Paris in three months and loot every province down to Toulon before New Year's Day of 1915. His " frau " was still waiting for the Frenchwoman's nice fine linen and the elegant garments he promised her, waiting with a sore heart, for she knew the Herr Hauptmann's lady had six " wonderbeauty " trunks full to overflowing

when they entered Lille. Ah! things are most disappointing for the poor German sometimes! No wonder he looked surly when he had to toil for his French captors, before he could enjoy his "gesegnete Mahlzeit" (blessed mealtime).

. . . . . .

It was a strange new Boulogne. Nothing remained of the familiar gay little town of one's youth—the *bains de mer* and bright coloured tents of the plage, the casino with its *bals masqués*, *bals d'enfants* and concerts, the lively market-place where one bought huge baskets of fruit for a few francs and an armful of flowers for a few sous. The whole place spoke of the British occupation. Everywhere one felt the pulse of the war. All public buildings, casino, colleges, châteux, convents were requisitioned. The notices posted up were in English —Military "Telegraph Office," "British Soldiers' Institute," and so on. Regiments from England were arriving all day. The streets were crowded with transports and motor ambulances, men of the British, Overseas, and at last, thank God, the American armies, whose appearance has raised the barometer everywhere to "Set Fair."

All Boulognais could say a few words of English and understand the difference between "too much" and "how much," and other vital questions. I passed some Tommies newly arrived near the station. One put his arm as he went by round a fresh, trim-looking maiden and greeted her as "bel fil," which

she seemed to understand in spite of the accent, and in no way to resent.

Boulogne was often visited by the Boche airmen, we were told, and in every street were numerous notices stating how many could be accommodated in the *cave-abris* in case of a raid. Only a week before a Taube had flown over and dropt bombs which killed thirty civilians and injured many more. But the inhabitants, as a rule, took these visits in the same philosophical spirit as we on the other side of the Channel. Of course there were occasions on which philosophy was blown so to speak to the winds, as for instance the deliberate bombing of a maternity hospital at Calais—and, later on, the ghastly affair at Étaples, where the German airmen, having found the big hospital encampment with their flares, descended to close range and turned the whole ambulance into shambles, sweeping it again and again with their machine guns. A Canadian who identified his sister's body among the nurses (many bodies could not be identified) swore that never would he take another German prisoner. The Huns no doubt excuse themselves that they did this unspeakable deed by order of their High Command, but could any men save Germans be found to carry out such orders? British or French would have been shot in preference. The verdict of Thomas Atkins was just this: "They're not white men!"

NINETTE

HAVING parted with my canteen friends who took an early train to Étaples I started out accompanied by the pretty little widow daughter of the house to see her own special *œuvre*, the "Goutte de Lait."

The small red cross on my coat had proved a passport to the affection of all the family. They found it "très chic" that an Englishwoman should give her services to their Croix Rouge Society, for had I not also my own wounded and prisoners of war and "un tas de choses" besides?

I pointed out that we three homeless dripping wanderers had found our French hosts also "très chic" the previous night. To be taken in at that hour when the house was already full, to have nice aired linen sheets and pots of hot water, to say nothing of delicious *café au lait* in the morning—we found that altogether charming.

"Ah! but that was nothing, nothing at all," laughed little Madame "Ninette." "Maman is only desolated that she could not nourish these ladies."

"But she nourished us admirably with that excellent *café au lait*," I assured her.

"Ah! but that was a little nothing," she reiterated.

The family consisted of Monsieur and Madame Carron, their daughter Ninette and her little girl Pauline, aged six. Monsieur had owned a merchant vessel and made good affairs. Having retired from the sea he now worked in his house of commerce on land. His keen kindly face had the clean breeziness of the sea, and when he talked it was always with a wide horizon in his view. Ninette and her child were the pivot round which revolved the lives of both parents, yet "pour la patrie" was inextricably interwoven with this devotion and when, on the declaration of war, the young husband of Ninette, to them a beloved son, was called up and fell among the first in those early days of disaster, they lifted their heads proudly in their grief, "pour la patrie."

Ninette, in her widowhood, returned to her parents' house and helped with the *pensionnaires*, generally some Englishman or American engaged in war-work in the town. A doctor and a professor at the Radium Institute were the present boarders. Ninette is a model "Maman," acting both as nurse and governess to her daughter, whose studies, now that she is nearly seven, must, she declares, be serious. Her many talents are the joy and pride of her parents, for Ninette is not only domesticated but highly artistic.

"She can sing both the classic music of the Opera," said her mother, "and also the gay melodies of the *café chantant*, while accompanying herself on the piano to a marvel. To make pleasure to our English

guests she sings also the "Omesweetome" and "Loflyheyes."

I admired an embroidered frock—it was Ninette's work. And not only all the clothes for her child, but her own dainty toilettes and the *costumes de fête* for her mother, all were made by her dexterous hands.

The "Goutte de Lait" was Ninette's war-work. Two mornings in the week she gave her services there. I agreed that, of course, I must visit an *œuvre* so beneficial to the children of the country, "and see how well one arranges for the babies."

This Society has existed for many years in France, long before Maternity Centres were thought of in England. It has depôts in every town, and has accomplished splendid results in saving child-life and improving child-health. Everything was spotlessly clean and the last word in hygiene. The mothers brought their babies every morning for milk and medical advice, both given gratis up to the age of two years. A weighing machine tested the progress made. Not only did wise counsels on the walls meet the eyes of the young mother, but friendly hands were there to help the lame dog over stiles.

From the "Goutte de Lait" we went to visit a cousin of Ninette's at the Military Hospital installed in the former Écoles des Beaux Arts. It was curious to read on doors and passages, "Cours de clarinette," "de Haut-bois," "Salle de Dessin," "Cours Solfège," and realise what different sounds filled those halls now—sad sounds of suffering—groans of the

wounded—sobs of the bereaved—the grim, tragic music of war.

Ninette's cousin was a returned prisoner from Germany. Even six months in Switzerland had failed to restore his crushed spirit and emaciated body. The Germans had tried to force him to work in the mines, but being a *sous-officier*, *i.e.* a corporal, he had persistently refused, since every man who yielded made it worse for the others. To punish him and break his spirit the Boches had stopped at nothing. For weeks he was brought to the verge of starvation and never at any time received enough to keep a man alive. Like our own men they depended for life itself on the parcels from home.

"But the worst was," he said, "when they kept us—there were seven of us, sergeants and corporals—sixty hours without food or water in a dark cell, in solitude. To be without water, ah! Madame! you cannot figure to yourself what that is—one fears to lose the senses. When we came out into the air and light once more we regarded one another all bewildered. It was a pitiful sight, which made the heart to tighten. We were but six instead of seven—the Boches for that reason let us out, they feared the vengeance—for we others, we French, we are not as you English, when we know for sure what those devils arrange for our poor boys, we say—"good! so we will arrange also for you." In this manner some improvement has been achieved. But though we punish them no Frenchman can be

guilty of the cowardly cruelty of the Boche—it is not in his temperament, see you."

"That poor seventh prisoner?" I asked. "Was he dead?"

"He was dead. They said he had a malady of the heart—it was a lie. A strong heart is capable of failing, lacking water sixty hours, food and oxygen also. He was a fine boy that one from Provence—always he had lived in the full air—in the sun. He had but twenty-two years!"

"Think no more of these sad things," said Madame Ninette. "Thou must take courage and think of the future, that good day soon coming when we and our English Allies will chase the accursed Boche back to his own pigstye." But as we left the ward she sighed, "When I hear what they endure, those poor ones in Germany, I thank God my Henri fell rather on the field of battle."

And this I found was the general sentiment of the *poilu* himself, far rather death than to be taken prisoner by the Boche, for that often meant not only death but before that release untold suffering, mental and physical.

This hospital belonged to the poorest of the three Croix Rouge Societies, the "Femmes de France." They were unable to afford luxuries such as pianos, gramophones, games and flowers, but the patients all looked happy and content, for at least they had plenty of cigarettes and took life easy, the rule being rather that of home-life than of an Institution. I

noticed though the windows were all shut, every man, even some in bed, wore his little blue uniform cap—for fear of catching cold should anyone have the imprudence to leave a door open. The *poilu* clearly considered the only place for fresh air was out of doors, and the nurses appeared to share this opinion.

All Croix Rouge hospitals are a free gift to the country, so are also the services of their matrons and nurses. If the latter are unable to work year after year without any payment, a small salary is paid by the Croix Rouge society itself to defray their expenses.

On our return to the house Madame insisted on my joining the family *déjeuner*, if I would excuse a very simple repast which she had prepared in our absence—just an *omelette aux fines herbes*, a *ragoût*, *des pommes de terres sautés* and *des petites Suisses*. When I complimented her on the excellence of her *cuisine*, again it was of Ninette's talents I heard: "A far better *déjeuner* she would have made, for she was a veritable *cordon bleu*. Ah! but there was a wife for any man—Ninette! No matter what she did, it was with a delicacy of touch, a precision, a capability. He would be the fortunate one who should marry Ninette!"

This being said in her presence, Ninette protested laughing and blushing:

"*Maman* she does not understand that in England one says not such things, one is—how shall I say—more reticent."

"More reticent! How then! it is but the truth what says thy mother," pronounced the Papa Carron, his blue eyes twinkling.

And the small Pauline chimed in: "But yes, it is the pure truth that—and in England says one not the truth?"

Upon which Ninette told her daughter that in England the children they conducted themselves always well, and preserved a discreet silence during the repasts.

Pauline rejoined with the reflection that in that case England would never be her affair!—A remark which drew from all her family in turn a stern "tais-toi, Pauline," as unbecoming in the presence of an English ally.

While Ninette prepared the *café noir* her mother drew me aside and confided that her dearest wish was to see Ninette remarry herself. "She has taken the idea to espouse an Englishman; she likes them, both the English and the Americans, which to her is the same thing. They make no compliments, but they sit there and regard you with honesty and steadfastness," declares Ninette.

I enquired if there was anyone in particular whose steadfast and honest gaze had found favour with Madame Ninette.

"Not precisely perhaps as yet——" hesitated her mother. "My daughter she is *éprise* with all the English—the entire nation, see you! also she desires to travel—to see the world—in that she resembles her father. He loves the movement, that one there."

French women can rarely bear the thought of uprooting themselves from France; when they do so it is generally only under the compelling influence of personal devotion to a specially favoured one. I wondered if the professor could not have shed some radio illumination on this problem. Madame's next remark, however, shook this idea, for she enquired whether I happened to know of some nice Englishman—an American she did *not* desire on account of the Atlantic—desiring to marry himself, whom I could thoroughly recommend? well-ranged, good-tempered, indulgent with children. There was the little Pauline, and it is not every man who is prepared to take to the heart the child of a previous husband—solid, but provided he had a good position and the good health the fortune need not be colossal. Ninette could bring a pretty little *dot* to the marriage; and Ninette, she was a girl serious as well as gay of temperament—a good heart and an admirable head for the affairs.

I replied that for the moment I could not, so to speak, lay my hand on just the right man, but I certainly would not forget her wish, and no one could doubt that he would be both happy and fortunate who married pretty little Madame Ninette. That professor of radium already had my sympathy.

It was with feelings of warmest *entente cordiale* that I made my adieux to Madame, and parted from the family with a promise to visit them again if my way back to England lay viâ Boulogne.

Acres and acres of camps, tents, hospitals and huts—this is Étaples—the once quiet little town with its cobble streets and fish market, where in old days of peace one was wont to debark for the *plage* of Berck or the golf links of de Touquet. From the train I saw some German prisoners engaged on the artistic work of camouflaging a group of wooden buildings—daubing on the greens and greys and browns in bewildering patches which merged the walls and the roofs into the landscape to the confusion of brother Boche in the sky—a singularly aptly chosen occupation for brother Boche on the land he had so wantonly invaded—may it teach him in future to keep his big feet on his own soil!

In the train to Compiègne I found myself with an officer of the artillery, very smart in his dark blue uniform and many decorations. In spite of the warning posted up in every carriage, "Taisez vous, méfiez vous, les oreilles enemies vous écoutent," we soon began to talk, and he, as they express it, "with the open heart." No doubt he felt that an Englishwoman, sufficiently in sympathy with his country to be working for the Croix Rouge, need cause him no misgivings as to the friendliness of the

ears which listened to his sad story. For poor fellow his was a tragic case for all his brave and gallant bearing, and it seemed a relief to him to speak to anyone who could sympathise.

A citizen of Lille, when called up for service he had only a few hours in which to prepare for leaving his wife and child, and an important business in the town. It was arranged his wife should follow him—her passport was promised. This happened more than three years ago, and since then no word had reached him from his wife, nor was she permitted to receive any news from him. The people in the occupied regions are enveloped in the silence of the grave. "It is far worse," he said, "than to be a prisoner in Germany, for there at least one knows if they live or die—one can send and receive letters—food also can be sent in packets. But we others endure a torture of suspense which drives one to the despair."

He took a photograph from a small case which he said was a portrait his wife had contrived to send him, not long since, through some unknown hand, that of a neutral leaving the town no doubt, strictly forbidden of course to carry letters. Though showing that she and the child were alive it had filled him with anxiety, they were depicted as so thin and ill—the boy, now thirteen, grown very tall—"He resembles a telegraph pole," said the poor father, "he is starving—my little son, there is not a doubt—and if he starves, ah how much

more my wife, for she would deprive herself of the last crumb for the child."

The bitterest thing of all was that he had discovered the passport made out for his wife had been obtained fraudulently by another woman, an alien who had escaped from Lille with it; through a Society which traced the refugees he found that his wife's name had been so used. Being a man of influence he had appealed to all the authorities —to the Pope, the President, Cabinet Ministers, Mayors and Councillors, but all in vain. His business was ruined, the bombardment having destroyed all buildings where it stood. For him "everything was finished!" Yet one more terror still remained— that when the Allies drove the Boches out of Lille and bombarded the city as they surely must, French guns, his own perhaps, might kill his wife and child!

What comfort could one dare offer? To say with Pippa, "God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world," was manifestly impossible. Browning was never a Frenchman living in the days of the great and terrible War. Yet deep and eradicable is the conviction in most of us, and as we talked I felt it was there, unconsciously perhaps, but there deep down like a well from which he was drawing strength that some day all would be "right with the world," and with himself. Pierre Loti says that the war has killed atheism—"There are no atheists at the front," and the gallant bearing and courageous face this French officer presented to the world had

a far deeper significance than merely that of the conscripted fighter.

Two English officers joined us at Étaples. They were going on to Paris and so was the Frenchman. After saluting each other with a friendly glance they settled down to an impregnable silence. I asked one of my countrymen if he spoke French? He regretted that neither he nor his companion could get beyond Ollendorf's first pages.

"I learnt French at Eton—you know what that means," he explained.

The French officer had already told me he knew no English except "Owyoudo," and "aw' right," —but he intended his boy should learn—if ever . . .

What a reflection on our so-called civilisation and education! Here were three of the finest specimens of English and French gentlemen unable to exchange an intelligible idea, though fighting side by side for the civilisation of the world and brought up within a few miles of each other, divided only by the Channel and the narrow but impassable gulf of speech—a bridge so easy to construct, yet not considered necessary. Even the dumb dogs can do better! Let us hope that one result of the Great War which has bridged so many gulfs and broken down so many barriers, may be to open the doors of a common speech between at least the friendly and civilised peoples of Europe.

It was dark when I got out at Amiens, and again

pouring with rain. This was a new aspect of a French October—this greeting of tearful skies, but no doubt like everything else, having its origin in the war. "Que voulez-vous—c'est la guerre," is the prompt explanation for everything of a contrary nature, and it is remarkable how even the most remote happenings can be brought into line with this theory by an ingenious system of long distance connections, such as the relation worked out between "The House that Jack built" and "The Cock that crowed i' the morn."

Having heard the same reasoning in England for three years, however, one was well seasoned.

Amiens, like Boulogne, had been transformed into an English town. The streets were brown with khaki when I went out early next morning. It was good to see the beautiful towers of the Cathedral still soaring up unscathed into the blue instead of sharing the fate of Rheims, of Ypres, and the long list of other consecrated shrines whose charred ruins mark the trail of the destroyer.

The little waitress who brought my breakfast was a Bretonne from Quimperlé, that quaint old town of bridges where I spent some happy days in a former existence—before the war. That I knew and loved her remote native place was an instant bond. She had come to Amiens to be near her brother, become insane from shell shock.

They had put him in an asylum for lunatics the poor boy, but he was able now and then to

recognise his sister, so, "surely *le bon Dieu* would restore him soon his senses."

She had beside this care on her heart another—her unknown *filleul, i.e.* adopted godson, a Breton prisoner of war in Germany, to whom she sent parcels and wrote regularly. For some months past no word, alas, had come from him. She feared he must be dead. "Ah! so many died down there in that accursed country of an accursed people."

These working-girl godmothers to unknown godsons are to be found all over France. It is not only their own particular "brave boys" they care for, but their hearts go out to those others who have nobody—no homes from where the cheering letters, and the parcels which alone keep life in them, can come. To this Society of "Marraines" belong thousands of French women of all classes from the richest lady to the poorest working-girl. They adopt not only the prisoners of war but the homeless *poilu* in the trenches. That the latter are quite unknown to them personally is no matter—"one writes with a full heart when it is to one of our 'brave boys,' see you." In many cases when the "*poilu-filleul*" gets his seven days' leave his godmother opens her doors to him, and he knows the joy of a home welcome—he who has nowhere to go, for thousands in the devastated provinces have been rendered homeless and their families scattered as refugees.

A NOYON HOME

On arriving at Noyon I went to the principal hotel, the only one which I had been told was "possible." It hardly deserved even that qualified recommendation. The original proprietors had long since flown; it had fallen into alien hands, and the bedrooms were a choice of evils. Great holes gaped in the walls, and the floors were as dirty as though the *sales* Boches had just evacuated. These holes were caused by the stove pipes being torn out by the Boches on their departure six months ago. Impossible to mend them said the proprietor—there were no workmen.

All stoves and gas pipes, electric wires, main drains and sewers, had been cut throughout the town—the latter to ensure an epidemic of typhus. But in this pious hope the Boche was doomed to disappointment, the Noyonais being inoculated from long use in somewhat imperfect hygienic arrangements—an ill wind that blew them a distinct gain on this occasion.

In the dining-room, at the table next mine, I found a French lady wearing the small red cross which proclaimed us of the same fellowship. She had come to these devastated regions to assist in

the work of reconstruction on which the Croix Rouge and numerous other societies were at work, supplementing that of the Government which gladly accepts their aid and their reports.

Having arrived the day before, she had with strong misgivings engaged one of the holey bedrooms, trusting it would at least ensure plenty of fresh air —the holes were so placed they certainly ensured a draught. On hearing that I brought an introduction to the Military Administrator of the district she offered to accompany and present me. The little Croix Rouge is like the Masonic sign between strangers in a crowd, or the sound of your native tongue in the desert. Finding we were both engaged on the same work under the same banner, we threw in our lot together to our mutual pleasure and advantage.

Monsieur l'Administrateur Militaire was a very much occupied gentleman installed in an old château near the town. When ushered into his presence, after waiting some time for previous arrivals, I was glad of the support of my new friend in vouching for my bona-fides, which she did with the readiness of an old and valued friend, tested by the wear and tear of years.

I presented Monsieur le Capitaine with the introduction I brought from the Présidente of the Croix Rouge Britannique, requesting he would of his kindness facilitate my mission to that region by enabling me to see as much as possible the needs of the hospitals, canteens and inhabitants of the

destroyed and ravaged villages—so that the English funds might go where most needed.

He read with contracted brows—twice during his perusal an orderly came in to announce another visitor and was dismissed curtly with " qu'il attende." Three times the telephone's demoniacal little ting-a-ting forced him to lay down the letter, and so distracted him by the mental switching off and on that he began it over again each time.

Finally he looked up and enquired with a worried look :

" Et dans quel but êtes-vous venue ici, Madame ? " (" With what object are you here ? ")

I repeated the contents of the unhappy letter, my friend putting in a helping word at intervals. At last his poor distracted brain having admitted the new claim on its activity, I am bound to say he lost no time in setting to work.

Hearing we were at the Hotel, " A real hole " he pronounced. " I can arrange for you better than that." Giving us an address for rooms he told us to call again next morning, and promised to see if a military car could be put at our disposal to visit some of the ruined villages where reconstruction was going on and help needed.

We made our way at once to the address he gave. It was a dignified little white house, green shuttered, standing back in its own garden, overshadowed by the protecting wings of the cathedral. A sort of Cranford-looking house, with a perfect old French

Cranford couple inside, waited on by a faithful old *bonne* twenty-five years in their service.

"Entrez—entrez, Mesdames," said the frail little white-haired lady, opening the doors of the best salon as we introduced ourselves. "Monsieur le Capitaine has reason—I shall be pleased to receive these ladies if they will excuse that I give them but little service, also that I nourish them not. The coal it is very scarce, and the Boches they have deprived us of all the gas, even as of the electricity."

We agreed to take our repasts out. No one seemed anxious to supply us with food. The best salon contained a big Empire bed, also a large *armoire* and washstand, while still retaining its character of best salon, with Louis XVI. *canapé* and *fauteuils* in brocaded silk, like the curtains which hung from the tall French windows. We engaged this and a room of the same spacious proportions overhead, and very thankfully moved from the Hotel, willingly paying for the night we had had the good luck not to spend there.

"For two years and eight months we had in this house eight Boches," said the old lady. "The Boche Colonel he occupied this room—he slept in that bed. The commandant he took the room adjoining. Three other officers slept in the rooms upstairs, and besides these we had also to lodge their three orderlies. They left us but one room for ourselves. They burrowed in every corner. Ah, but it was

terrible! You cannot figure to yourselves, Mesdames, what we endured for those long years—never we thought it would finish—waiting, hoping always for succour which came not! In the purgatory one could not suffer more."

We agreed that she would certainly need no further purgatory after such severe soul discipline.

I looked doubtfully at the bed. "You said the Boche Colonel slept in that bed?"

"Ah, but I have had it thoroughly purified," she hastened to reassure me. "The mattresses remade. Have no fear, Mesdames, the entire house has been cleansed from floor to ceiling. My beds they remember no more the Boches. Many good Frenchmen have slept in them since, and this salon where the dirty Boches they eat—it has been cleansed with the most strong disinfectants. Have no fear."

She spoke the truth. The Boche had been so effectually obliterated that my dreams were of old French life in the days of Eugénie Grandet—of peaceful and sunny sleepy days when Monsieur le Curé's visit for a game of chess in the evening was the great event of the week. But my first waking thought was of the Boche, for on the wall of the salon hung a large engraving in a massive gilt frame, on which the eye of the successive Boche Colonels must often have rested in displeasure. The wonder was that one of them had not sent some missile flying through the glass, for the subject was Rouget de Lisle singing "The Marseillaise" to an

applauding audience. You could hear the words—"Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons."

The faithful old *bonne* Hortense when she brought my hot water loved to linger and recount her own personal sufferings under the *sales Boches*, whom she "conspué" with a heartiness worthy of Rouget de Lisle himself. The orderlies were her special trial.

"Ah, the *cochons*, and each one imagined himself to be the Kaiser! Figure to yourself, Madame, not alone five officers in this unhappy little house—but three soldier servants! One set they would go, only to be at once replaced by three worse. They all treated you as if you were the mat on which to wipe their great boots. And they dared to seize for their use all the fine bright saucepans and frying pans of Madame which never anyone was permitted to touch. *Pouah*! the dirty *canaille*, and how they maltreated them with their greasy messes—their pigs' flesh. Ah! Madame, but their habits and customs were of the most filthy imaginable—words could not describe it." Nevertheless Hortense made a very good attempt, and her memory was extraordinarily faithful for details which made one shudder.

Hortense and her mistress occupied the only room the family were permitted to retain, and were graciously accorded the use of the kitchen. Monsieur Besnard was obliged to live at the house of commerce on the *Place*, and see to the business and supervise the employées—young girls apt to have the head light and get into mischief if left too much alone,

said Hortense. Sharing your kitchen with *sales Boches* is not an easy situation. There were times when Hortense confessed she was tempted to take up the long knife even as Charlotte Corday, and finish off the interlopers with " a good stroke," a deed of which she would have felt no shame before *le bon Dieu* or the Blessed Virgin herself—quite the contrary! But there was her poor little Madame, so delicate, crippled with the rheumatism, subject very often to a crisis of the nerves in these terrible days of horror and violence. Without her old *bonne*, for of course they would have shot her on the spot, what would Madame do? Hortense who understood all her little tastes, " also the little tastes of Monsieur—just the turn to his omelette, the degree of heat for his filet, see you!"

So Hortense had renounced the heroic rôle of Charlotte, with deep regret she had renounced it, and with a mighty effort at self-control she played the duller part, enduring the daily insults and coarse jokes in which men of German Kultur and their aping menials are past masters, above all when a woman old, homely and defenceless, is the target.

" Me I understood very well their language," said Hortense. " It is not only with the tongue one speaks—the laugh, loud and insulting—the grimaces —the gestures, ugh! But only once did one of those animals dare to spit on me. They will spit on the curate. They will strike their mothers who bore them, those there! Ah! but I paid him well.

He was the cook, the fat Hans. His soup just ready to serve I made to upset. I make pretence it is by an accident. It flowed on the floor, not a drop was saved. Me I shriek like a lost one! The Boche he stands rooted, the face all purple, spluttering words terrible to hear. Then he seizes a large frying pan to strike me, but I save myself and enter quickly the room of Madame, turning well the key of the door. For such a thing one would surely have deported me to Germany, like others never more to be heard of, had that soup been for the dinner of the officers, but those gentlemen had fortunately already dined, it was therefore the soup for the domestics. And when that *cochon* he recounts the affair to Monsieur the Boche Colonel, who demands of him what is the cause of the *tapage*, the Colonel and the other officers, they who had dined and drunk well, they laughed from a full stomach. It amused them much that the good bacon-soup of the fat Hans it flows on the earth, and they chase me not as he desires. But my poor little Madame she had great fear that those Boche servants they kill me, and she permits no more that I shall enter the kitchen. So I make all the repasts of Madame in the bedroom on a miserable little stove of oil; but it tore me the heart to renounce my kitchen and to know nothing of what that *canaille* they made there with my beautiful saucepans!"

Though our hostess had declined cooking for us, when we produced our English tea at five o'clock and begged for boiling water, she hastened to bring

out a delicate little tea-service of First Empire and all requisites for our indispensable "Fife-o'cloak," without which she had heard no English people could endure their lives. Each one to his taste! For her own part she took the tea as a medicine only for which it served well. "These," said Madame, showing off the little urn-shaped teapot, sugar basin and cups, "were the only things we contrived to hide from the Boche officers. Every other article they burrowed out. All we possessed they took. Argenterie — china — linen — blankets — covers of embroidery and cushions of lace. All, all, they seized—some to send away to Germany—great cases full—the rest for their use here. But all they used they quickly destroyed—even as vermin destroy. Only this little tea-service, a wedding present which I possess now forty years last month of June—this, I vow they shall not take. And I pray to the good Saint Joseph, he who protects the houses of all good Catholics who offer to him a candle on his feast day, and he inspires me with the happy idea where to hide my Empire cups, so that never the Boche he shall find them."

"Where did you put them?" I enquired eagerly.

But she shook her wise old head with a secretive smile, and would reveal no more even to a friendly ally. Who knows, perhaps lurking deep down was the nameless dread — (prophetic, alas!) that the enemy hordes might one day return, and that secret hiding-place, if revealed to another, be wrenched

out under threats of torture. Who could tell? Prudent to run no risks.

The Boche appeared to be a very destructive animal, even when not out on destruction bent. Everything he had in daily use rapidly "came in two in his hands" as the breaking servant describes it. Legs came off tables and chairs, handles off jugs and cups, towels and tablecloths tore like paper, cigar ends burnt holes in everything burnable, sheets, bed-covers, carpets, tablecloths and sofas. The Louis XVI. furniture had been utterly ruined by the spurs on their boots; only that in Madame's own room had survived.

"The Boche officers have habits altogether gross and disgusting," said Madame Besnard. "They are not civilised as we others. Everywhere they have the custom to spit. Though I place for them four *crachoires* in the salon think you that they make use of them? Ah, but no, they prefer the carpet—the tablecloth, never mind what. Always after the dinner of midday—it was not as our *déjeuner* but a dinner very solid—they slept for two hours here in the salon, installed in the armchairs, the legs raised on another chair. Thus they reposed themselves, pushing forth snores of such a force one could hear them on the *Place*. Me, I feared they suffered from a false digestion by too much eating, till I found this also it was a custom of Germany. Ah, *mon Dieu!* but to dwell with such animals, and to see them as the masters in your own house, these odious enemies of France—the desecrators of our

country, of our homes! Ah, Mesdames, you cannot imagine to yourselves how it made one bad blood."

Poor little old lady! Her home had been her pride and delight. Ever since she came to Noyon as a bride she had dwelt in the dignified little green-shuttered house. Here her two children had been born. From this house the daughter Lucette had married, returning often with her babies to make the old home blossom with another spring. The only son also lived there all his life, a day boy in the town school, later at college, and even making his military service near by. When he married, adding another daughter to the happy home circle, it was only to move to the house on the *Place*, where he took over the family business.

All the quiet serene years of happiness and duty, recording a simple, useful life, were embedded in those four walls as in a casket. With the Frenchwoman's genius for home-making she had added year by year to her stores. Making her little economies to purchase always what was good and durable, with an eye to the future when the children would inherit. The linen, the china, the silver, even the copper stew pans—all were of the best. And then, like a bolt out of the blue came the war, and before any one had time to realise what the grim word signified, like a sea of rushing waters when the dams have given way, came the enemy—the Huns—flooding all the country side, burning, killing, destroying, *Schrecklichkeit* their watchword. "They come!

They come!" cried the terror-stricken population as they fled before them, clutching their children in their arms and dragging with them in handcarts and barrows anything they chanced to seize in the hurried departure.

To save the children was the first thought of the grandparents in the white house. Already Louis, the son, had been mobilised, leaving his wife and two little ones at the house on the *Place*. The train service was all disorganised, fugitives in every sort of conveyance streamed along the roads, flying before the advancing hordes. Hiring a cart and horse, the poor old grandfather, endowed with a sudden superhuman strength and energy, packed in the children and their mother with necessaries hastily collected for their journey, and sent them fleeing down the road to Creil. As he returned home, at the garden gate he found his wife awaiting him in her wheelchair pushed by the faithful Hortense. It was piled up with provisions. "Come, my friend," she said firmly, "the order has been given by Monsieur le Maire for all to quit the town without delay."

Her husband would have preferred remaining to guard his property, but the habit of a lifetime prevailed.

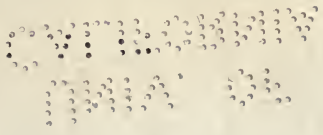
So the three old people took to the roads. That night they slept in a barn about three miles from Noyon. They could go no further.

"During those hours of the night," said Madame Besnard, "while my husband and the poor Hortense

they slept bruised with fatigue and emotion, me I reflected. I made my decision. With the daylight I say to my husband, '*Mon ami*, you have reason—it is the folly pure that we leave our house to the Boche brigands. They occupy the town—they invade our house. Well at least they shall not find it deserted, left to them to make what they will.' Hortense, I say, we return even as Monsieur counsels—let us eat at once and depart. So we return to Noyon, and many also follow our example—for where could we go, everywhere we hear the cry the Boches come. They arrive! One cannot go on foot for ever! This house we found, thank God, still as we left it. The Boches were streaming into the town, but had not yet penetrated every corner. It was not long they left us in peace however. Every house was commandeered, and we received our orders to accommodate the enemy to our utmost possible capacity.

For two years and eight months Noyon belonged to the Germans. Like a great machine working with the regularity and implacability of factory wheels the Hun occupation was organised. Monsieur Besnard came round when he could spare time to see his wife during the day, but always had to leave her before seven o'clock curfew rang, after which no French person might leave their houses or show a light on pain of heavy penalty and imprisonment. The business on the *Place* went on, for a drapery store had its uses for the Boches, but they paid

Cathedral of St. Quentin



only in German paper money which, though it passed currency at the time, is now valueless. Poor Monsieur Besnard was left with three thousand francs worth of their paper on his hands.

On one occasion when Madame Besnard came to my room for the little talks in which we both took great pleasure, I asked whether she had ever had any decent Germans billeted on her, or whether they were all of the same brand.

She replied that all had a curious similarity of bearing and manner. "It is a part of the German uniform," she remarked impartially. "For that I blame them not, though it is not agreeable. I have known those who were well conducted—and those also who were badly conducted. The most of them I will concede were correct—that is in this house they were correct. Only on one occasion a Colonel he brought here two women of bad reputation. Then me when I saw enter those *cocottes*—I felt all indeed was finished. Never, never would my poor little house again be clean—it was disgraced! I wept, and my poor Hortense she wept so loud, the Boche Colonel he sent to enquire if my husband was deceased. Then I required that he should come and hear what I should say to him, and very plainly I told him why I wept. He replied nothing, but presently I hear from the salon they all laugh to make crack the ceiling. Nevertheless, they invited no more those *cocottes*, and the Colonel he tried to make amends the day after by offering

me a concert. Yes, he had the cool blood to invite me to enter my own salon to listen to some music which an officer would make who was a famous violinist, said he. Ah! but I should hear how it was beautiful the music of Germany! '*Merci*, Monsieur,' I reply, 'the music of Germany I prefer never to hear it—already I have heard too much of your music of Germany.' 'As you please,' he says, and lifts the shoulders as he would say, 'The old fool!' But he determines all the same that I shall hear his music, for in the evening they open wide the doors of the salon, and that violinist he played for more than an hour. I must confess he played well—very well—though me I refused to make attention, for it was the music of Germany. They called out always, 'Now, Madame, listen—this it is Beethoven'—'this it is Brahms'—only when they call, 'this it is the music of Mozart,' then I permit myself to listen, for Mozart he is a good Frenchman, our Mozart."

Her face shone with such innocent satisfaction, I left it at that. After all is there not a long street in Paris—the Rue de Mozart? And are not all the great artist-spirits of the nationality of those who comprehend their language, in whatever country they may chance to dwell? In this sense Mozart is as truly French as German. "La musique n'a pas de nation, c'est une langue universelle."

Poor little Madame Besnard! Though her home is cleansed and purified once more, and she and

her husband dwell again together in the green-shuttered white house with their faithful *bonne*, and the children are re-installed with their mother on the *Place*—yet they have not yet the security of peace. Still they take up the daily paper with a beating heart. Still they dread what the postman may bring. The number of casualties are never published in the French papers, but they know no family in Noyon where death has not claimed its toll. Lucette's husband has lost a leg—thank God it is no worse. Louis also has been wounded, yet still spared, but for how long—who knows! Anxiety for him has eaten deep into their hearts. Through all those years of the occupation no word reached the parents from the outside. Sometimes a daring aviator flew over the town and dropped a newspaper. The penalty for picking it up or reading it was two months in a prison cell, in solitude and starvation. But this never prevented it being seized with alacrity, and passed from one to another like a loaf among the starving, before any Boche could prevent it.

The war was very near on every side. Hardly a day or night that one did not hear the distant boom of guns. Hardly a day that the call to take cover did not sound while a Boche machine flew overhead —at that moment only on observation bent, but the anti-aircraft guns made you pause and gave you to think, very anxiously to think, with the little ones over there on the *Place*.

FOOTPRINTS OF THE BOCHE

MONSIEUR L'ADMINISTRATEUR was true to his promise to assist us in visiting the devastated regions.

Most gallantly putting himself as well as his car at our disposal, he took us first to see the village of Blérancourt, the centre of a work of reconstruction undertaken by a society of American ladies. We crossed the river Oise and the canal where the bridges had been blown up by the Germans when retiring the previous March and built up again in three weeks by the French. Occasionally we saw Boche prisoners, P.G.'s, at work in the fields, or, with poetic justice rebuilding the not too hopelessly shattered houses and barns—their own handiwork of a few months before. For the most part they were young, ruddy and sturdy-looking, well fed and well clothed, but like those at Boulogne by no means of an amiable countenance. They saluted our Captain very promptly—seemed aware of his presence through the backs of their heads—I expect it was woe betide them if they didn't. These men knew better than to beguile the days of their captivity with "Songs of Hate," and "Deutschland über Alles," for the benefit of their French captors, as did their brothers in England. Neither were

they provided with motor lorries to drive them to their work. Even a walk of two miles was only regarded as salutary.

"If they desire to eat well, must work well, *ces Messieurs là*," remarked the Administrator drily. "As soon would we give them champagne for breakfast as waste petrol to conduct them to their work."

This remark was called forth by my Croix Rouge friend having said that when in England she had seen the Germans from the camp on Salisbury Plain driving daily to their work, jeering as they passed the foot passengers and lifting the while their cheerful voices in songs of Hun triumph. To her French ears it had struck a jarring note on the morning air.

Though I assured Monsieur l'Administrateur there were also English ears which suffered acutely from the curious phenomenon of this jarring note, I could see he was not prepared to regard me as wholly blameless in the matter. Studiously polite, there was, nevertheless, a chill in the atmosphere. His conversation showed him as a man of highly-strung nerves and of a fierce patriotism. Talking with him even as an ally strengthened by the bonds of cordial understanding was like stepping delicately, Agag-wise, from one red-hot brick to another. It is not an easy position to find yourself held answerable for the policy of twenty-two members of a Government you have had no choice in appointing—yet unable to repudiate any of their deeds lest one should be deemed lacking in patriotism.

Scylla and Charybdis are a reposeful alternative in comparison.

We found the Settlement of American ladies busily at work giving out boots and clothes at their depots for relief, stocked with shiploads from America. They had taken over a number of villages in the devastated regions of this part, and as the inhabitants flocked back to the ruined homes from which they had been driven by the Huns, they helped them to start life again. In their well-tailored uniforms of the French "horizon bleu," short skirts, high boots and blue felt hats, they looked both smart and business-like, with due regard to losing none of their feminine charm, as was evident by the complete capture of the heart of the gallant Military Administrator.

"They are not only charming women they are also real great ladies" (*de vraies grandes dames*), said he in a burst of enthusiasm. "Their dashing motor cars with the little flags of stars and stripes, their American shiploads of stores, their inexhaustible funds, from which they were ever ready to draw, these attractions, combined with charming manners and good looks, formed a constellation of starriness sufficient to make any man an astronomer," as George Meredith has it. To the refugees of these ruined villages and homesteads they appeared in the light of wondrous radiant beings from a far distant world. "Les dames Americaines," was uttered in the tones in which the ancient Greeks

must have spoken of the Olympians when in beneficent mood they descended to the earth. Driving through many of these villages we saw a great deal of their excellent work. The comfortable little wooden houses (*barraques*), where the homeless families are being installed for the winter. The restocking of the farms with live stock, seeds and vegetables, and the orchards with fruit trees. Everywhere the returning inhabitants were setting to work with courage renewed and hope revived by this timely, friendly help. They were supplied also with agricultural implements and garden tools so difficult to obtain in any part of France, all such factories being used now for making munitions. *L'Amérique* was the wonderful storehouse, the land of plenty, from which came food and clothes, boots and stoves, pots and pans, even spades and ploughshares. Many a poor destitute victim of the Boche lifted up the heart in gratitude that *le bon Dieu* had made America, and Christophe Colombe had the good luck to discover it. But though Americans and English have done much to help them, the people best able to raise the stricken inhabitants of the devastated regions are naturally those of their own nationality, their own faith, their own speech. The Frenchwoman, who has lost her husband, her son, whose home has also been burnt to the ground, who uses the same speech and finds comfort at the same altar—she can speak to her poorer sister from the depths of a common suffering. To these other sufferers she can say, "I understand,

for I too am French. I too have given all—have lost my heart's treasure—have found comfort in the faith of our fathers."

Though she may have but little money to give, and few of the gifts of the generous Americans, she gives what is of infinitely more value, the sympathy which stimulates without danger of enervating, the example which engenders hope and courage. Such workers are found living among their people, teaching them how to build up a new life amidst the ruins, literally out of the ruins, showing the quickly adaptable women how to turn their hands to new and unaccustomed trades, holding little extemporary schools for the children and cliniques where the babies and sick people can receive medicines and advice.

"Just to see Madame la Comtesse, it warms one the heart, see you," said one brave old body. "Like the good red wine of the country which fortifies we others more than all the other kind gifts. She has the right word for everyone—she divines just what you want—some baby clothes will be needed for this one—a big saucepan for that one—for me and my old one it was a little stove—impossible to obtain, one declared—yet Madame la Comtesse she obtained it. There are of course many things we need she cannot give, but always she gives the courage—she lifts up the heart which has fallen into the despair—crushed by the sorrow, see you, for she has also known what it is to be crushed by

the sorrow. Her three sons they have been killed in this cruel war—'My friends,' she says, 'they have given their lives for France, our brave boys —yours and mine—let us show by our courage and our faith in God that we are worthy of them.' It is like that she speaks, Madame la Comtesse, and it consoles, it warms the heart, more even than the good words of Monsieur le Curé."

Going through these villages where the Huns have left their most deadly trail, there were many where hardly one stone remained upon another. Chauny, for instance, is only a heap of ruins though still periodically shelled, no doubt in memory of the fact that there were once aniline works there. Some villages still have a few walls but half burnt, and wherever it has been possible the courageous French have set to work repairing and reconstructing. In the fields the soldiers have rendered important assistance. When resting at the back of the lines, and often during their few days' leave, the *poilus* have devoted their time to helping the old men and women who alone are left to do the work of reclaiming the devastated land—clearing, ploughing and sowing. One of the most Hunnish of all the Hun deeds has been the wholesale deportation of all the able-bodied women under fifty, and the cruel tearing from their families of all young boys and girls over the age of fourteen, leaving only those they considered useless. The scenes that took place were heart-rending, many mothers who would have

followed their children but unable to leave the babies at home, becoming nearly insane—fighting desperately to defend them when their screaming children clung to them in a frenzy of terror. But the Huns showed no pity, no mercy, even insisting on separating brothers and sisters, mother and daughter, when deported together. These deeds were nearly always perpetrated at night, thereby adding to the general terror and dismay.

The little village churches are almost all blown up, lying prone in a melancholy heap upon the graves of the once peaceful God's acre. The only thing surviving here and there is a tall crucifix emerging from the chaos as if triumphing over all the efforts of the Boche. Most of the châteaux also have been "made an example of"—either reduced to a pile of ruins, or the walls alone left standing, gaunt, charred and blackened with gaping holes and sightless windows—a spectacle for all the countryside to behold and shudder, as at a grim gallows set on a hill.

Neither were the orchards spared in which this country abounded. Acres of bleeding stumps marked the deadly trail of the Boche. He has hacked down even the long avenues of poplars whose friendly whisper was such an indispensable accompaniment along all the country roads, and is now silenced for twenty years to come.

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And this was once a smiling land flowing with

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CAUMONT IN 1917

CONTENTS

milk and cider, glowing with fruits of the earth, cornfields and orchards heavy laden; happy little villages crowned with an ancient church spire, where dwelt a people, industrious, frugal, sunny-hearted and content.

Here in his happy wanderings journeyed the "Arethusa" with his friend the "Cigarette," paddling their canoes down the canals and the rivers Oise and Aisne—tramping over the hills and resting at night in the friendly woods or agreeable little villages nestling among the folds of the fertile valleys and open pastoral country.

What would that devout lover of France say and feel could he see the Golden Valley now! That air once so sweet with the breath of "rejoicing trees" and growing things, now laden with the dust of burnt-up villages and farms, the smoke of exploding shells and poison gas. Instead of the glowing stretches of corn and the green beauty of the fields and fruit trees, nothing far as the eye can reach, nothing but grey stony desolation—the earth so scarred, so mutilated, so dry and arid, it seems impossible Nature can ever heal such wounds and restore poor Mother Earth to life and greenness. The bodies of France's defending sons are sown in that desolate waste among the gaping trenches, entanglements of barbed wire and charred woods, scene of such repeated battles. Sometimes a tiny green enclosure, or a little wooden cross with the tricolour rosette marks a solitary grave, but whole

armies lie there barely hidden from sight, sown not in weakness or defeat but an honourable death, *dulce et decorum*, to be raised in power and undying glory.

The churchyards and cemeteries were full of soldiers' graves. One of the most pitiful sights was the long row in a newly-made cemetery, of open graves—ready, waiting. . . .

All along our route were traces of the battles so recently fought.

The village of Bailly was completely razed to the ground, like Chauny, no habitation left. At Ribécourt the people had suffered from the depredations of the wild boar as successor to the Boche. Not having been hunted for three seasons he had grown so bold as to dare to come into the gardens and take off all the vegetables newly planted. At this village a good deal of reconstruction was going on, many houses half demolished being repaired and little wooden *barraques* erected. Often the returning refugees lived in the remains of a cowhouse or barn, any shelter if only to be on their own "foot of earth" once more. One family consisting of a grandmother, her daughter and a small boy were living in the only building not destroyed—a damp and disused stable. Around them were the ruins of their once prosperous farm, a comfortable house, barns and sheds.

"No less than one hundred Boche soldiers were planted on us at first," said the farmer's wife. "They

lay one over the other, there was no place for us except this old stable where we had ceased to lodge the horses—it was too damp for them. When they left, the enemy burnt all to the ground, even the trees of the orchard they cut: there were no apples like ours in all this country, and see now!" She pointed to the melancholy stumps in what had once been an orchard. It gave one almost the feeling of looking on mutilated human beings to see those bleeding tree stumps.

"For two seasons they lived here. The Boches liked well our poor apple trees, they eat all the fruit—all the chickens—all the milk. They left us only the beetroots!" she added bitterly. Yet the spirit of home-making was unquenchable, and once back on their own land they had set to work with a will to remake, even to re-beautify if possible. This was shown by some drawings made by the little boy which decorated the walls of the poor stable.

"He has the idea one day to become an artist," said the grandmother with pride. In the garden was still the deep trench made by the Boches when they were fighting over this ground, but the *potager* or kitchen garden had already been restored to something like order and profit by the energetic work of the women and boy who lived chiefly on the produce—beans, potatoes, cabbages and beetroots. One most invaluable assistant they had—a goat! A French landowner of that country presents one of these useful and unexacting animals to anyone

applying to him, and there are few who do not apply. We have yet to learn in England what a friend the goat can be, especially to children, and how modest are her demands.

Right close up to the grey hordes the returning inhabitants were settling down in any shelter they could find—clearing the ground, sowing and planting just as though they had now nothing to fear. It reminded me of the way the villagers on the slopes of Vesuvius return to their homes destroyed by the molten stream of lava, and rebuild and settle down again before the volcano has ceased rumbling. The German guns were often heard rumbling in those days. Yet even the French Government encouraged the return of the inhabitants by giving compensation for their losses in cows, pigs and goats. Many however were utterly destitute. In one village I met a poor bent old woman who, while my friend was talking to the postmistress and enquiring of the latest arrivals, begged me to come and see how she was lodged. We walked down a dreary street of ruins on either side; among them she showed at length a roofed-in shed.

"That is where we live, my old one and me," she said. "At the back there stood our farm—a fine farm it was, the neighbours will tell you. The *sales* Boches have made of it a heap of black stones! My old one has become quite foolish from the miseries we have suffered—often he speaks badly even to me. He understands nothing, the unhappy one!"

Great as were her material woes it was those of the heart which evidently hurt most. That her "old one" should be so changed that he spoke badly even to his *vieille*!

They were living in the former hen-house. *Les jeunes Quâquères* had supplied beds and *Le Bon Gîte* a small oil stove and pot for cooking, "So one manages," she said philosophically. But when she spoke of her *vieux* the poor old voice quavered, and when she told of her son from whom no news had come for two years, the tears coursed slowly down the poor old furrowed parchment cheeks.

"He and his wife and two children all had been deported to work for the Boches in their accursed land. The poor boy he was lame with a malady of the hip, or of course he would have been serving as soldier like everyone else. The Boches they care not who they take! They drag a dying one from his bed to work in the coal mines. Ah, my poor boy—my Charles, does he live still!"

The only comfort I could give was to write down all particulars and put her in touch with the Society which makes the repatriation of the deported their special business. Already they have achieved something by getting the intervention of the Pope and the King of Spain. The Huns have been obliged for diplomatic reasons to restore some three hundred of the women and girls carried off to slavery the previous March. Thousands were seized in the occupied territory, and this it was hoped was only

a first instalment of those soon to be restored. One thing however seemed but too certain, that many would die before their rescue came. There was the young sister-in-law of the postmistress of where we stopped on our way. She was among the fortunate three hundred—if you can call anyone "fortunate" who looks like poor Clémence—so lifeless, so hopeless —"as yellow as a lemon! And that girl had six months ago the cheeks colour of apples the sun has kissed," said her sister-in-law. "But there, what will you, she has lived for four months on beetroots and soup of cabbage-stalks——"

"It was not alone the hunger, it was the dirt—the misery—the agony of mind," said the girl suddenly, and then relapsed into silence. Evidently she could not talk of that time in Germany. It was too recent. But when she left the room, we learnt how they had been sent back in cattle-trucks herded together to suffocation. During the journey which lasted nearly seven days and nights they had gone through such torment that three of their number had succumbed, and with their dead companions they had continued to the end of that journey.

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In these villages occupied for so long by the enemy many a drama, many a tragedy has taken place. For though the Boche was here under strict discipline, and the terrible outrages impossible which took place at the outbreak of war in Belgium and the North of France, when mad with drink they

raided the convents and the girls' schools, sparing no one, old or young, still the Hun is always a Hun and does not change his spots even when obliged to hide them. The misery and starvation of their children drove many of these village women into a terrible situation. Sometimes the victim had as little voice in the matter as the nuns in Flanders, but often it was to save her children from starvation and cold in the awful winter months, food and fuel being nearly all seized by the German, that the young wife of the absent *poilu* sold herself.

There was one such a case round which the whispers of the neighbours still centred—she who dwelt in the cottage standing back from the road—apart like herself. "Ah, the miserable one—what will you! The Boche he paid her well—he was well behaved, that one. The good God knows one could not say this of many of those animals there! She had three children, see you, and to give them enough to eat with the few francs she gained by washing, it was not possible. At first she refused to act badly—*la malheureuse*—then the eldest child he began to cough and to grow so thin one could count every bone, the others also like all the little ones, became pale as parsnips. Ah! but it tore one the heart to see the children, the babies, who died in those days. One day then at the end of her forces, Madelon in despair she became the mistress of the Boche—the miserable one—to give to eat to the little ones she did it—not from lightness, you under-

stand! She said to herself if he comes back, my François, he will surely pardon me when I show to him the children who are well and strong. Then at last arrives the time when we gain a victory and our army it pushes the Boche out of this village. So quickly our brave boys they advance, the enemy had no time to burn the village and to make jump the church, as in other places. Then one day there comes to the door the husband of Madelon, the brave François. Six months before the Boche he had departed leaving her with a *gros bébé*. Strange it may appear but Madelon she felt for that *bébé* a sincere affection. François he takes in the arms his wife —he embraces his little ones—when suddenly he looks! There in the cradle he sees a child, fat, rosy, of perhaps ten months old. It must be remembered for two years and a half he had not seen his wife nor heard any news. 'Whose is that child?' he asks all trembling. '*Hélas*! my poor François,' cries *la malheureuse*, 'I will not lie to thee—it is my child—to save the life of Pierre it was that I consented at last. The Boche already six months he has departed, without doubt by now he is killed—in all the cases never we shall see him again.' She wept —she excused herself—she reproached herself—never had she loved any man save her husband—of that she was incapable. But to all she said he replied nothing. Like a stone he regarded her, as though the heart had ceased to beat. Then without a word he picked up his knapsack and his helmet

from the floor, and he turned away. Down the street out of the village he went, and never again has the unhappy Madelon heard of him."

Will François ever return? Has he gone back to seek death, or to inflict it on as many of the Boches as possible. That abhorrent people who have taken all—all—that made life worth living. Better a thousand times had their guns killed her and all the children—that he could have borne as others have had to bear it. *Le bon Dieu* would have kept them safe and clean in His Paradise till he too should depart and be reunited to them. But now, what was left to him! Not only the hideous fact that she, his well-loved wife, his beautiful Madelon, had belonged to a vile Boche, but in his home confronting him daily, the child of that Boche calling his wife "mother." And she, loving the young Boche, as a mother must love her innocent helpless child, caring for him as for the others. And this daily going on under his very eyes, so that never for one hour would he be able to forget! Poor François. Poor, poor Madelon!

One day we had as our guide another Commandant of the district. His life was not so harassed as that of his *confrère* at Noyon, and his temperament far less highly strung. The very car in which he was wont to drive on his rounds would have been enough to produce a crisis of the nerves with the former, whereas this gallant and genial gentleman seemed quite oblivious that he was seated upon a

quivering corkscrew, and so beguiling was his conversation we were enabled to sit on corkscrews likewise with smiling faces as he told us of his experiences with the British Allies and his partiality for the English officers. The Scotch too with their uniforms so amusing, so original, he liked "Oh ver' moch." Once he had been to a Scotch church—that also was "very original." He had heard there "an excellent discourse"—evidently rather a surprise.

"But I will confess," he said, "that I received at first a shock to hear that preacher treating the good God with such familiarity—addressing Him 'thou' as if He were a comrade of the trenches! But after a time it becomes clear to me that the *bonhomme* he had no intention of blasphemy—quite the contrary, this mode of address was merely a Scotch custom even as the kilt uniform—the whisky—the bagpipe! And to say truth I approved very much of that discourse given with such sincerity—such eloquence—which his costume of black draperies rendered profoundly impressive."

Jolting over the broken roads our guide pointed out how thorough had been the work of the Boche even where his retreat had been a positive scuttle. Not a bridge but had been blown up—not a *carrefour* (crossroads) but had been mined—one of these, an important junction of main roads, had been mined with a time fuse, deferring the explosion one month, by which time it was calculated there would be constant transports along this route. But the

Angels, whose guardianship has been experienced on many occasions besides that of Mons, saw to it that nothing disastrous resulted save a huge cavity.

"The fashion in which the Boche executed his plan of destruction was always the same," said the Commandant. "It was perfectly simple, and of the thoroughness of the Car of Juggernaut. When the order came to retreat, already some days before, every horse and cow had been driven away. This made little difference to the inhabitants, for the Boches had appropriated them from the moment of their arrival. The villagers were summoned to assemble in the church—on pain of death every man, woman and child must obey. The church doors were then locked. The people inside looked at each other fearfully as sounds of explosions, of falling things, reached them from time to time. On the outer walls of the church too could be heard ominous, tapping sounds.

"'What is it?' asked the women, and the old men answered: 'They take out the stones—they make holes—Why? In order to insert mines or bombs and make jump the church!' The unhappy ones like rats in a hole they found themselves—impossible to escape, for outside the Boches kept guard ready to shoot any who even showed the nose at a window. After two, three hours, suddenly the church door is flung open and the Boche Commander shouts: 'Out with you—pigs! Go back now to your nice little village and each find his house if he can.'

"In truth," went on our guide, "it was often difficult to recognise a single house. All was by this time in a blaze. Walls were falling, broken windows smashing—orchard trees cut down, leaving only bleeding stumps. The Boches had cleared away all things of value which could be taken in their lorries—all the animals for food, pigs, fowls, etcetera. What they could not take they destroyed and then set fire to all. As they left the church matches were applied to the incendiary pastilles and mines, and with a loud report the church lay prone upon the graves. 'Vorwärts,' then cries the gallant representative of Kultur, and they proceed to the next village."

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For some time we drove on in silence. The idea of reparation, of reconstruction seemed so hopelessly inadequate, so utterly futile. And the destruction was on such a vast scale the whimsical words of Lewis Carrol kept singing in my head—

> "'If seven maids with seven mops
> Swept it for half an year,
> Do you suppose,' the walrus said,
> 'That they could get it clear?'
> 'I doubt it,' said the carpenter," etc.

I, too, doubted it! As hopeless as the seven mops to clear away the sands of the sea-shore appeared the task of clearing away the debris of the Boches—*les sales Boches!* Yet as our friend the Commandant observed when I tried to express this depressing thought, "Il faut faire ce qu'on peut!"

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Destroyed Château at Verneuil, 1917

We had not finished with the Boches that day, for having seen how they treated the country people, their homes and their churches, our guide explained we must now see what they did for the aristocracy and their homes.

"Here we see how the Boche he arranges a château!" said the Commandant as we drew up before some stately, iron-wrought gates. It can only have been owing to a deplorable oversight that these had not been battered out of shape.

Through the gates we looked in vain for any sign of human habitation. A gigantic heap of rubble out of which occasionally stuck a broken window frame, the corner of a carved cornice or the suggestion of a marble mantelpiece—that was all.

"The country people come and search for wood to light their fires for which the window frames still serve," remarked the Commandant. "This was once a charming château, style of François Ier. Many a pleasant hour have I passed with the hospitable hostess—my old friend. Now, alas! robbed of all. The Boche has taken her sons, her grandsons, her home, her village with the little church she lived—all. Her love for France, her faith in God—these alone remain to her. Her only daughter has died in childbirth, she could not support the agony of mind or body—she succumbed. But we old ones sorrow does not kill, or where would any of us be?"

Surrounding the château must once have been a

lovely park. One could picture the happy, peaceful, dignified life of that old lady. With her dainty Louis Seize furniture, her old satinwood spinette and *Boucher* fans, her powdered grandmothers smiling serenely from the panelled walls. Her ordered, pleasant, useful life among her family and her villagers. And then out of the blue—a horrible cry which forty-four years before had rung through the land—so long ago it had been relegated in her memory to a past existence—War! And before one had time to realise the haste and hurry of the rapid mobilisation the hordes of grey vermin were over the frontier sweeping everything before them. "They come, they come! The Boches! Save yourself!"

"She was old and without force, my poor friend, or she would have remained to confront the enemy and to help the wounded, but they insisted she should escape while yet there was time. And in the night she left. When she returned, six months ago, it was to this!"

. . . . . .

Another château we passed standing high on the hillside. In the distance one had the illusion that it had escaped the universal destruction, but on coming nearer one saw its sightless eyes and roofless walls. It was but a charred shell, a crucified monument left standing as an example of *Schrecklichkeit* —a warning to those who dare "stand upright in the path of the German," as Bernhardi said.

"In the private chapel there they broke open the tombs, and threw out the bodies. They enraged themselves very much, the Boches, because the ancestors of the Comte had omitted to be buried with some of their valuable jewels. The Boches found nothing to repay them for their trouble. It appears that some very High Personage took part in this pillage—it was really very inconsiderate of those old French counts and countesses to be buried with fine monuments which contained nothing but their miserable old bones!"

Our guide chuckled gleefully as he thought of the disappointment of the High Personage and his minions.

. . . . . .

But as we drove on from one wrecked village to another through the scarred, arid country of many battles, the amazing madness of the Hun impressed one more and more profoundly. To loot châteaux, to steal cows, even to annex provinces—who was the better for it? And the price paid in millions of Huns, leaving widows and mothers mourning all their days. Would a cow or a farm full of stock make up for a beloved son? And the price in taxes, in hardships, even suppose them victors? What, then, was it all for? What was it all about, this incredible, overwhelming world war of the German making?

Are they such fools as to wish to take over France or England? In what respect would it add to their happiness—the happiness of the German people?

The pride and greed of the High Command it might gratify no doubt, but would Hans and Fritz be the better for it? The prouder grows Fritz's master the worse for Fritz. Was *he* ever one whit the better for the filching of Alsace and Lorraine? Does Hans or Fritz go home, if perchance he ever *does* go home, a happier or a richer man because he has assisted in killing two million Frenchmen, destroying their peaceful, prosperous homesteads, and three thousand beautiful churches in ten Départements of France, inflicting torture and death on the inoffensive inhabitants, men, women and children, who bore him no ill-will, and were wholly guiltless of any desire to possess anything belonging to him? Even in the matter of loot, was the game worth the candle? True, Hans brought home the clock he stole from Pierre's kitchen, and he fought Fritz for a big copper stewpan, but it was only the officers and the High Command who got the valuable things. The Crown Prince, for example—Ah! for the trainloads that one carted away from the château of the old Marquise with whom he passed a week, for such abundant booty it might perhaps be worth while to make a world war! But from the standpoint of Hans and Fritz when they came to reflect on the net result to themselves, surely aggressive war (and all their wars have been aggressive, planned deliberately), is raving lunacy.

LES JEUNES QUÂQUÈRES

In these devastated regions a settlement of some young men of the Society of Friends were also doing most helpful work. Everyone spoke well of *les jeunes Quâquères*, though some regarded them rather in the light of natural curiosities.

"Young men of good health, of good disposition, of intelligence even! and yet they obtain exemption from making their service to their country. What droll young men! What a droll Government!" commented one of our military friends. "But then, of course," he added by way of explanation, "for you others this war is not serious as for us. We have the enemy here planted upon our soil. For us there can be no question of indulging in the fantasies of the excellent young *Quâquères*. But at least we can make them very welcome here—it is an excellent work they accomplish, aiding the returning inhabitants to cultivate their lands and replant their orchards."

The headquarters of the settlement was a farmhouse which they had made very comfortable, and where they kindly invited us to share their midday meal of simple but excellent fare.

Though within sight of the German sky sausages

and within sound occasionally of the German guns there was a note of the peaceful idyllic life among this community of young English and American men ; rising at dawn from their low beds in the wide attic to tend the cattle, milk the cows and plough the fields ; busy all day bringing order out of chaos, erecting temporary shelters for the homeless inhabitants and helping the scarred and stricken earth to regain her blessed fertility and serenity. As they gathered round the board with healthy outdoor appetites, their few remarks showed their interests and concerns were solely for the weather, the crops, the beasts. It was difficult to realise that we stood in the heart of the war zone on the ground of recent battlefields, and not on a ranch in California or a farm in Dalacarlia.

Yet the family for whom they were working this very farm were among the victims whose wrongs cried aloud to Heaven for retribution ; the women having been seized and carried off as slaves to Germany, while the men were fighting and dying to defend their homes from the wanton aggressor. The hordes of invading Huns had been driven only a few miles back after three years' colossal effort. Things were so critical that any day they might sweep back again over all this countryside, destroying the newly-sown fields, burning, pillaging, mutilating not only houses, barns and cattle, but women, old men and little children.

The industrious young Friends had succeeded

in filling the big barns with grain and hay, and stocking the place with pigs and fowls. They seemed to have no misgivings as to the power of the allied armies to hold the foe at bay. It never appeared to strike their simple, unreasoning souls that their peaceful rural work was absolutely conditioned by the readiness of these other men to give their lives in the firing-line.

To my French friend with not only three brothers, seven nephews and some two dozen cousins at the front, but every fit man of her acquaintance, this group of stalwart young men were such a problem that she could not resist the impulse to thresh out the subject with one of their number whose kindly intelligent face encouraged her to believe in his capacity to enter into a fair and reasonable discussion—an optimistic spirit I could not share, long experience in the arenas of social, political and religious reform having taught me that any reasonable and fair discussion, on any subject whatever, is impossible when one person is viewing it from a small side window and the other from the roof.

The Frenchwoman from her high level of patriotism, of individual life merged in that of the nation, could not conceive of the restricted outlook obtained from the narrow window of the individual conscience, held as supreme arbiter even when at variance with highest ideals of self-sacrifice for the human family. She began with gentle insistence :

" Tell me, I beg you, Monsieur, you whose con-

science dictates it is a sin to fight for the defence of your country, what would you do for the defence then of your family—your mother, your wife, your little child, if the Boche, bayonet in hand, stood on your threshold ? "

" Madame, I have never been placed in that position I am glad to say," the young Quaker replied, satisfied that this was conclusive. But the Frenchwoman's logic was not so easy-going.

" That you individually have not been faced with the problem is no answer, Monsieur. When one is dealing with conduct based on a question of principle one must face circumstances which others have to face at this moment daily. This ground on which we are standing is soaked with the blood of French victims to Boche savagery—women ravaged, little children mutilated and bayoneted while clinging to their mothers. If a Boche seized your wife what would you do, I ask ? "

" I would endeavour to deter him from violence with moral suasion," answered the young man earnestly. His simple belief in the power of his tongue was very curious—one wondered on what foundation it rested.

" Moral suasion with a mad hyena ? And if it had no effect, your moral suasion, my good Monsieur ? "

" Oh, then," said the poor young man driven into a corner, " then I should give him . . . a push ! "

"*Mon pauvre* Monsieur!" said my Croix Rouge friend with a shrug of her shoulders, "it is well indeed that you have no wife and no child to defend."

She turned away and the young man appealed to me. "It is not that I should fear being killed," he said pathetically, "but we think it wrong to take life, you see——"

"Would you not think it even more wrong to stand by and see a hideous cruelty perpetrated on a defenceless woman or child—whether your own wife and child it does not seem to me to matter?" I could not help asking.

"No," he said, "I should pray, but I would not kill. It is contrary to our creed to use violence or to take life."

I could not resist asking him if he was not thinking rather too much of mere bodily life and not enough of the soul life—whether honour was not a far more precious thing to keep alive than the body? "Besides," I went on, in spite of my convictions as to arguing, "in standing by while a Boche takes the lives of half a dozen French children you might save, you are really participating in their death. The fact is you want to be a neutral, and there is no such position tenable in the great spiritual conflict which this war stands for."

He looked at me in surprise.

"A spiritual conflict—war a spiritual conflict? I could never regard personal violence as a weapon

in a spiritual conflict," said he. "I regard this as *war*—man's war—and all *war* is wrong because it takes human life."

I was tempted to ask him, but forbore, whether his Society of Friends extended their objection to the taking of human life by other and far more protracted and painful means than guns and fire-arms—for example the deadly trades flourishing in the north country city where he himself lived, claiming their toll of thousands yearly, many of the victims children in their teens; or the white slave traffic which before the war engulfed in its deadly maw a vaster number every year than had been killed at Verdun. But I felt from his window he had never seen these battlefields—he was among that vast majority who accept conditions as they find them in spite of his Quaker scruples, which also, come to analyse them, had been accepted without much deep boring in the well spring. He lit his match without asking the fate of the match girls working with phosphorus. He wore his corduroy suit ignorant of the deadly lime solution essential to its manufacture. He turned on the tap to his bath without a qualm as to the appalling conditions under which women were making those brass fittings. Human life being sacrificed recklessly all around him and in such a way as made death by a gun *dulce et decorum* indeed.

I would have left the subject here, finishing it with these silent reflections, but the young Quaker

desired to justify not so much himself I believe, as his sect, the honour for which he was jealous.

"You see," he went on, "we believe in turning the other cheek, we endeavour to follow the teaching of Christ—He deprecated violence. . . ."

Here my French friend returned to the charge. Being of an old Huguenot Protestant family she was as ready with quotations from the Bible as a good Catholic would have been from the Church Manuals. She reminded our Quaker that it was his own cheek he was to turn, not his wife's or child's—"Nothing so easy as to bear the wrongs of others with tolerance," said she, "but the Christ never taught this—far from it. He said, He came to bring a sword—and as to stern action, violence if you will, did He not take a whip of small cords and drive those dirty, corrupt, desecrating tradesmen from the Temple when He knew talking was useless—talking would have meant throwing pearls before swine. What have you to say to *that*, Monsieur ?"

But the young man remained of the same opinion still, and said so. Though a Christian, it did not apparently follow that he considered Christ knew better than the Society of Friends. "I do not approve of violence in any form," he repeated immovably.

"It is a colossal conceit from which those young men suffer," remarked my friend when we were alone. "They think their little human intelligence and half-baked consciences are more to be heeded than the divine teaching of the Christ Himself."

But it was not quite that, it was the need for leaving his Quaker window and going up another floor from which to take in more of the view, as indeed many of these same Friends have done, with the result that they have given their services as stretcher-bearers, orderlies in field hospitals, etc. The young Friends regarded such service as violating the principle of "doing nothing to help the war," even indirectly, as would be the saving and restoring men for the fighting army. Yet they themselves were refreshingly inconsistent, for when I spoke of two young cousins of old Quaker stock who had laid down their lives in this war among the first volunteers, I was at once told of this one's brother and that one's nephew in the hottest part of the fight, and this without any regret, but quite the contrary, with a truly saving grace of inconsistency which made one's heart warm towards the speaker!

In the stables we found a horse who had proved that for quadrupeds at least conscientious objections were not workable on a farm. He had even forced his pacifist masters into the inconsistency of using physical force. The Quaker's rule required obedience from those working under them, but this horse had strong ideas on the subject of freedom of individual choice—he conscientiously objected to having his will crossed and to being put into harness, "Live and let live" being his motto. He had signified his protest against compulsory service by dealing a nasty kick at his master, and as a con-

sequence was deprived of liberty to repeat the action. Physical force had put a halter round his neck and punished him with isolation and short commons. He looked round as his sins were rehearsed, showing an angry gleam in the corner of his eye. It was evident he was of the same opinion still—ready for another, and even better placed kick, should his masters lapse into pacifism with him. He had the typically militant soul of the Conscientious Objector.

THE ANGEL OF NOYON

Noyon, like every other town throughout France, was full of hospitals—many with their two, three thousand beds, long miles of wounded—yet all this suffering kept quietly and unobtrusively in the background. No wounded or convalescent men were ever seen in the streets, rarely even a nurse; one had to seek out the hospitals, they did not "jump one in the eye." But they were there. Just outside the town spread the great evacuation ambulance of tents and huts, and in the town nearly every large building had been converted into rows and rows of beds whereon lay the victims of the Boche's *Schrecklichkeit.*

Among many French nurses calling forth my admiration, there was one I shall always remember with special affection—a charming young Croix Rouge *infirmière,* giving voluntary service at one of these vast military hospitals.

Not only her *poilu* patients, but matron, nurses and doctors, spoke of her as "the Angel"; they said the first to do so had been the English Tommies she remained, under German rule, to nurse in 1914. She accepted the name as a term of affection, not in any way as signifying a pedestal of virtues setting

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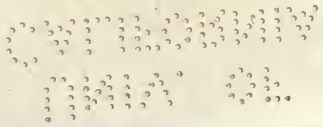
ANGEL AMID RUINS



her apart from her kind, though in her spotless white uniform and *coif* of the Croix Rouge she was fittingly garbed as a ministering angel. Her soft brown eyes and dark brown hair parted over serene level brows recalled the San Sisto Madonna, a human angel of the Mother type rather than the winged angelic being, too far removed for human nature's daily food.

It is certain one could picture no vision more healing and heart-warming to a wounded man regaining consciousness in hospital than the strong sweet young face of Mdlle Claire L——, sister in charge of the long ward of sixty beds in the Military Ambulance. This hospital, like all others in Noyon, was terribly understaffed, and Mdlle Claire had no one to help, even at night, with her sixty patients except the convalescent men, not one of whom but was ready to give his service to the utmost of his powers. The difficulty was to choose among the many volunteers, whether for scrubbing the floor, serving the meals, dressing the wounds or sitting up with the dying at nights. As she passed down the ward the dark heads on the pillows turned towards her as the wounded fifty years ago once gazed after "The Lady with the Lamp."

"She is my right hand," said the matron, also a Croix Rouge lady giving her service *bénévole* in this Military Hospital. "She is capable of taking my post to-morrow—the head so strong and the heart so tender, so sympathetic. Never she thinks to

spare herself that child! And with that she is of a courage to face an army of the Boches. In effect she faced them, the enemy hordes, when they swept into the town that day of August which one can never forget."

It was on the 29th of August 1914 the dread report flew round Noyon—"The Boches are advancing." The authorities desired all nurses to leave with the transportable patients. But Mdlle Claire, together with several other *infirmières* of the *Secours aux Blessés Militaires*, refused to quit those who could not be moved, among them some poor British Tommies as well as French wounded. The week before many had been brought in from the trenches at Commines, and day by day others had followed to be transferred to base hospitals with all speed.

The French nurses' brave decision to stay and face the dreaded foe was justified that very night, and twenty more British wounded had cause to bless the fate which bestowed such a boon as a French Red Cross nurse in what next day became a German hospital. Early the following morning, like a plague of grey locusts devouring all as they passed, the Huns swept over Noyon. Terrible stories preceded them, stories from eye-witnesses, scared villagers fleeing they knew not whither, like leaves before a gale. They told of ruthless savagery, fire and sword and pillage, and a fate for women and girls which made a clean death by fire or sword a grace to be

prayed for. Yet, realising all, the French nurses stood to their guns, refusing to desert the wounded.

Any and all nurses were urgently needed in those first weeks before the arrival of the German army nurses, and the French *infirmières* were overwhelmed with work day and night as the wounded poured in. The Hun doctors were not pleasant to work under, their attitude being that of the triumphant conqueror dragging his captives at his chariot wheels, but the lives of the French nurses became far more insupportable when the Hun army nurses arrived and took over the reins of government. These women, of a common rough type, made it their special business to insult and persecute the French ladies—not only because they belonged to a hated nation—let no one imagine the Hymn of Hate is reserved solely for the English—but by reason of the ingrained hostility the *pot de fer* experiences always for the *pot de terre*. To drag down the pride, so-called, of the Frenchwomen, to subject them to every indignity, was in strict accord with the Hun standard of patriotism. With this object in view they had recourse to a favourite German expedient; driving the matron, a lady of noble birth and noble soul, together with her staff of young nurses, into a long ward, they obliged them to strip and stand in a row for inspection, under the pretext of searching them. Marching up and down, the female Huns then examined each garment as if expecting to find bombs and poison concealed in

the folds. The scene was prolonged with truly German thoroughness, appearing to afford an endless source of German wit and merriment of the *pot de fer* quality.

"It was part of the price we paid in order to tend and comfort our poor boys," said the young nurse, "but it is difficult to think of those gross creatures and the ordeal they made us suffer without a feeling of abhorrence."

Mdlle Claire was fortunate in having her own home in Noyon, to which she could retreat when not on night duty. In an old house guarded by tall sentinel pine trees and flanked by a convent she lived with her widowed mother and an old uncle—a priest, an atmosphere which would have seemed likely to guarantee peace and security. But neither widows nor white-haired priests were spared by the Boche. They were brought under the iron heel and gripped by the mailed fist like the rest. The old priest was arrested, and after being roughly handled, packed off in a cattle truck to Germany "as a hostage," together with all other priests except those of extreme age and infirmity who were left to officiate at the Cathedral. Priests of military age had, of course, been mobilised on the declaration of war. In France a man is not held exempt on account of his priesthood from what is considered the first and highest duty—he rather leads the way; and the manner in which the French priest has fulfilled his twofold duties on the battlefield has done more

to restore religion and faith, and strengthen the Church, than all the miracles of Lourdes.

Mdlle Claire had only had a few months' preparation for the tremendous task that awaited her. Like many young girls of the educated classes she went in for a course of Croix Rouge instruction, not only with the desire to know something useful but as a pleasant way of meeting her friends and getting up concerts and entertainments to obtain funds for the Society. To be a member of the *Secours aux Blessés Militaires*, to pass your examination with distinction, was a fashion for some years before the war, and fortunate for their country that it was so, for when the sudden call rang out for women as well as men to mobilise for National Service, thousands of efficient, well-equipped young women were ready to come forward, eighteen thousand of the *S.B.M.* alone, and this number before long was doubled.

During those terrible years of the German occupation, when Hun tyranny ground down the lives of the inhabitants to starvation and misery, and deeds of gross injustice and violence went unpunished, Mdlle Claire, from her comparatively protected position as a Croix Rouge nurse, with mother and home near by, did her utmost to extend a sheltering wing to other girls. In the hospital the French nurses formed a bodyguard to each other. After their first experiences of the manners and customs of the Boche army doctors they always went in couples

to the private interviews to which these gentlemen so often summoned the young and good-looking nurses. Every device was used to break up this united front, but only in rare cases with success, chiefly no doubt because of the protecting influence erected on their behalf by the Swiss Croix Rouge, who, realising their danger, kept in constant touch. The Swiss could be of service to the Hun—prudent therefore to stand well with them.

Out of one hundred German doctors with whom she was brought in personal contact during those years, Mdlle Claire's verdict was that she had met but three who stood out conspicuously from the rest as "of good conduct"—a lower record than those of Sodom and Gomorrah. She was unable to concede even this percentage, however, in favour of the Boche nurses. It would seem as if the effect of German Kultur was signally disastrous on the women of the race, the male, by his denial to his womenkind of all claim to liberty, equality or fraternity, crushing out all that makes for self-respect or any noble ideal of her place in the universe. The result is, that like a plant deprived of light and space, the German woman, if not utterly crushed, throws out contorted branches and develops perverse and tyrannical qualities, when opportunity offers a victim, essentially unwomanly and unfeminine. It is not surprising they proved anything but sympathetic nurses even with their own men. "A man who found himself weak and ill they rather

despised," said Mdlle Claire. "Only when the men swore and spoke with coarseness and roughness they admired them."

The Boche wounded were not slow to realise the advantage of a gentle, well-trained hand and soft, low-toned voice. They had no scruple in showing their preference even at the risk of hurting and offending their countrywomen. "The Boche, he makes no attention to the sentiments of others," said Mdlle Claire. "As to the feelings of a woman, as soon would he consider those of the oysters he was eating."

I asked her if it was not a difficult task even for one of angelic disposition to nurse the Boche.

She admitted that there were times when it certainly was so. "But," she went on, "when they are greatly wounded—a poor one who suffers mortally —oh then one thinks only how to help him—he is of no nation—he is only a patient. The Boche nurses they are not so careful of the wounds as we others—they have the hand heavy, and always they hurry to get through the work—it was but natural the wounded preferred those who caused them the least suffering. But when he commenced to recover, Ah! then it was difficult to have patience with the Boche, for he became odious. He would boast to us how many French men he had killed —with two words of bad French and showing on his fingers, he made us understand. And not only soldiers but civilians—little children, old men and

women, young girls—'*Schrecklichkeit*,' he would shout and laugh. And soon they would punish all of us, the bad French people, who dared to oppose the good German, and they would show their big hairy arms getting strong and muscular for this fine work. Then it was I found it hard to approach those animals —to give them food—to dress their wounds. Ah, my God, to make them recover in order to kill our brave boys, our poor defenceless civilians. Only by telling myself that this miserable one he is deceived, he thinks to do his duty, he obeys his officer and has no choice—only so could I continue to attend him."

As she said this her brown eyes were lit with such a divine understanding of the deep roots of things that I understood how it was they called her "the Angel."

Like our little old lady of the green-shuttered house she described life in Noyon under German rule as a terrible ordeal for the inhabitants—in one respect worse even than for the poor prisoners in Germany, since they at least received occasional letters and parcels, and were permitted to write to their friends, whereas no word, no sign of life was permitted to reach these occupied regions, no word to be sent out from them.

"For nearly three years," said Mdlle Claire, "we had no news of my brother who is aviator. My poor mother, ah how she suffered not to know even if he lived or died. The dangers to which the aviator

is exposed are so great few survive a year. Hardly it seemed possible we should ever see him again. Yet the miracle has happened and he has been spared to us—never even a wound up till now. He too suffered the tortures of anxiety and suspense, fearing our fate, yet hearing no word—only reports sinister and fearful of the cruel Boche rule. It is the suspense which tears the heart—to give our lives we are all prepared—the mother who sees her son depart has already made the supreme sacrifice."

All through these long drawn-out months and years, though cut off from all news, the French captives never lost hope, never wavered in the sure conviction that the Allies would ultimately be victorious. Even should Paris fall, Heaven would not fall, and no reverse was going to quench their high courage. They had often little ground for hope, and things looked black enough. Their boasting captors fed them on the lies they themselves more than half believed, and though their prophecies and dates were never correct, the fact of many fair provinces being under German rule was a grim reality not to be denied. Whenever they had any pretext for proclaiming a victory the Boches paraded the streets shouting songs of German triumph or glory, filling the cafés and drink-shops all night, and flying German eagles from every window. When they first swarmed into Noyon they boasted loudly that in three days they would be in Paris, and it appeared at the time only too probable. From there they would march

south, sacking and pillaging very province till they reached Toulouse. So in three weeks the war would be gloriously finished! Their rage against the French knew no bounds when this admirable programme somehow miscarried. The Boche wounded in the hospitals found a vent for their outraged feelings by an increased attack of spitting, even in the faces of the French nurses, while others bit the hands which dressed their wounds. One shining example of patriotic vengeance begged for a cup of boiling milk—three times he peevishly rejected it as not up to the heat he required. At last he expressed himself satisfied and therewith turned and flung it in the face of the patient Croix Rouge nurse. A chorus of bravos from his brother Boches followed on her cry of agony.

. . . . . .

Hearing that an English soldier had died in hospital I expressed a wish to visit his grave. It might perhaps comfort some one at home to know it was cared for. The Angel of Noyon volunteered as my guide, and we set out one day for the little cemetery.

At the entrance was a large enclosure gay with flowers; at each corner waved the French standard over a long list of those who had laid down their lives on the field in those first terrible days. I found on the grave I sought only a little wooden cross bearing the brief inscription—"Smith, Soldat Anglais. Mort le 30 Sepbre 1914." Not even a Christian name to guide one through the vast throng of patriotic

Smiths who have given their lives in the great fight for right. The date showed he had died just in time to be spared capture by the Huns, thank God.

A little corner was reserved for the Mohametans of the Senegalese regiments, their graves marked by the Crescent and Star together with the French colours and a verse of the Koran. The Great War has gathered into one fold all nationalities, all religions, all classes, the Cross and the Crescent, the white and the black races. Monsieur le Duc lies side by side with the peasant *poilu*, the same flag and the same inscription mark their simple graves—"Mort pour la patrie."

My guide led me to the grave of the first Boche to be laid among that worshipful company. He deserved the honour even less than the generality of his comrades, it appeared, for when I translated the inscription for the benefit of Mdlle Claire, who knew no German, and desired to know none, she gave a little laugh of fine scorn.

"Hans Grobt," it was writ large, "died a hero's death (*Heldentod*) for his Fatherland." "A hero's death! I will tell you *how* he died, that one," she said. "He was killed by his comrade one night in a drunken brawl. Both tried to enter an empty cab to pass the night—the one endeavouring to prevent the other from getting in—a revolver settled the affair for this hero. All the town talked of it—but this is the way the Boche renders facts—such are the typical Boche heroes."

All the same for the sake of some poor mother somewhere in Germany I felt glad of that German lie.

. . . . . .

On leaving the cemetery we made a tour of the old town, and my guide pointed out the huge pits prepared for mining and utter destruction before the Boche retreat in the previous March. Only the rapid advance of the French had saved the town.

"An advance patrol of our brave boys arrived just two hours before they were expected by Messieurs les Boches," said Mdlle Claire. "They came just at the good moment. A Boche officer and his six men were in the Cathedral—already they had removed the flagstones and made a great hole into which they were about to lower the mine which would make of our sacred shrine, our beloved Cathedral, a deplorable ruin, like so many others. Our soldiers descended upon them like the judgment of God. There outside, against the wall, they shot those destroyers, those desecrators—and it was well finished with them!"

Even an angel of mercy has moments of righteous indignation and satisfaction in the execution of justice. But as she spoke the familiar sinister sound of the "Take cover" signal tore the peaceful air. A German wasp soared overhead buzzing spitefully, and a chill feeling clutched one at the heart. The wasp overhead dropt no bombs; he

was merely out taking observations, such an every-day occurrence no one paid any attention to the warning. Noyon nevertheless was on the very fringe of the German front—a precarious position. If ever the Huns got the chance how would they deal with that grand old Cathedral after being so ignominiously baulked? Verily there will be a terrible bill to pay for those six Boches shot against the wall, in strict accord though it was with the stern laws of warfare. It was difficult to suppress the fear that Noyon had not finished with *les sales Boches.*

THE *POILU*

THOSE two French classics "Le Feu" and "Gaspard" had already made the *poilu* known to me in so far as it is possible by means of printed book, vibrating, throbbing with life, while Sir William Orpen and Mr Herbert Ward had made familiar his outward aspect—many varieties of type, but all stamped with the unmistakable yet half elusive characteristics of the gallant, irresistible, irresponsible, unquenchable, unconquerable French *poilu*. But no portrait either in word or paint is equal to an hour in the train with Monsieur Poilu, half an hour in the hospital, or even ten minutes at the station canteen.

The *poilu* is of course of every class, of every vocation, of every variety of temperament, from the impulsive, emotional, talkative Tartarin of the Midi, to the taciturn, moody, emotional Jans of Brittany. And think of the gamut of tones between these extremes of gaiety and gravity! The Parisian of nimble wits, highly strung nerves and artistic tastes, the solid, steady, commercial *bourgeois* of the manufacturing districts, the quiet, contented peasant proprietor of the rich corn and vine lands, at the call of France their Mother, all these sons

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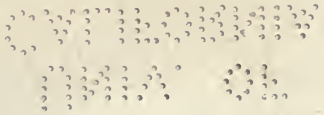
Poilus' Graves in Cloisters of Noyon Cathedral



take on with their uniform of "horizon bleu" a family likeness which is undeniable.

The qualities which actually "jump one in the eye" are a quiet restrained cheerfulness, an entire absence of boasting and flourish, together with a resolute, almost grim purposefulness, to fight, to die, *pour la patrie*, to which end drive out, and kill, the *sales Boches*.

As they pressed round the canteen of the *dames Anglaises* at the station, where many thousands passed daily, changing trains to and from the front, one met the *poilu* of every type, including the dark-faced Moroccans and Senegalese. It was heart-warming and delightful for those *dames Anglaises* to see how their services were appreciated as they dealt out the hot coffee, soup and chocolate, not forgetting the *Petit Caporal* and Woodbine. "C'est rudement chic les dames Anglaises," as I heard one of them express it.

Often it is only a passing glimpse, a chance word you get with Monsieur Poilu on these occasions, for generally the time is short and the crowd great. But he does not forget the *dames Anglaises* whose cheering cup was accompanied by a good smile and a few words, none the worse, perhaps the better, for the strong English accent. "Nos bons Alliés—Vive l'Angleterre! Oh yes, awright," he sings out as he disappears into the waiting train. But often a week later, his precious seven days' leave being over, he is there again reminding the *dame Anglaise* of a message she sent his

wife, or a bet she made that the *petit gosse* would know him even before he cleaned off the mud of the trenches. At the slightest opening his face lights up, he is ready to make a joke of his wounds, his frozen or blistered feet, the accursed mud, the accursed cold, and the pest of the trenches, the thrice accursed *totos*. Of all he makes nothing—"Que voulez-vous? C'est la guerre!"

Sometimes the *dames Anglaises* have seen pretty deep down into the simple heart of the French soldier, for not only at the canteen, but at the rest camps behind the line, where the men spend several days at a time, they have a unique opportunity of getting in touch with him. Monsieur Poilu in repose has two passions, *la manille*, a card game in which big piles of *sous* change hands with lightning-like rapidity, and letter-writing. You see him in the recreation room, where paper and pen are provided, covering sheet after sheet—his head bent low over the page, intent and absorbed. Some there are, however, who have not attained this enviable proficiency, and then it is that the canteen lady comes in as a good angel. She is as safe as the confessional, you see, and if only the feelings with which you are bursting can find words she will fix them on paper for you. Many is the love letter the *dame Anglaise* has penned, often eloquent with unwritten things between the lines. Those four little words for instance, "Ne t'en fait pas"—what condensed meaning they hold. "Ne t'en fait pas"—when the heart it is cracking—the

anxiety it tears you—when you get no news—or even bad news—or, well, suppose even the news after which there is no more news—"ne t'en fait pas, ma vieille," or "ma 'tite femme." With an inexpressible tenderness which you try to press into the pen—"ne t'en fait pas!"

Of these letters to wives, fiancées and mothers, it is generally the mothers who get the most fervid love letters. She is the first love, and among all classes she often retains this first place throughout life. And because the wife desires one day this same devotion from the fat cherub at her breast, she accepts the situation in a spirit of poetic justice.

In the little *poste de secours* behind their canteens the *dames Anglaises* are often called upon to give first aid to the frequent ills of the war-weary *poilu*, an aching tooth, an unbandaged wound, a blistered heel. A little timely remedy earns a great reputation as a doctor and a touching amount of gratitude. This is expressed in many ways—little odd souvenirs of the trenches—a German button, a bullet or piece of shrapnel extracted from one of his own vital organs—or one of those mascots which form such a feature of life in the trenches, sometimes left as a sacred charge till he shall return for it. To console him in the wearisome trenches for the absence of his home objects of affection, Monsieur Poilu will adopt any substitute at hand, and, failing a dog or a cat, a rat often fills the part, and becomes a cherished little friend and companion, sharing his

rations and sleeping up his sleeve when weary of running races over his face. Magpies and doves have also joined this auxiliary army of the brotherhood of St Barnabas, in which the dog holds from time immemorial the first place.

There is one malady to which the canteen lady sometimes gives "first aid" without knowing it, for it is a complaint which the *poilu* would never, could he help it, allow her to suspect—and that is *le cafard*. Without doubt *le cafard* is a microbe just like the influenza microbe, the enteric microbe or any other virulent abomination. It is particularly attracted to the gallant and high-spirited, and a *Croix de Guerre* is no safeguard against it. It makes its insidious attack just at a moment when, having said good-bye to all you love, you are feeling about as elated as a pricked bubble. A deep depression and silence fall upon you like a pall. Then with the suddenness of an air raid you explode, and—expressing yourself with violence, with bitterness—you hear yourself saying curious things for which you are not the least responsible.

So had the symptoms been described to me. When therefore I and my Croix Rouge friend were travelling one day in a crowded train to Lyons, in company with a number of *permissionaires* (men on leave) we recognised a victim of *le cafard* without difficulty. The *poilus* swarmed into the first-class carriage—all classes alike being open to them—great round loaves of home-baked bread on their backs, their

pockets bulging with provisions crammed in by loving hands as they went off again to face the German guns and gas.

Laughing, singing, smoking, munching cheese, they did not at first notice one of their number who had dropped into the furthest corner, silent and sombre, his bent head in his hands. The *Croix de Guerre* showed on his breast. The man next him was taken up by troubles of his own which even the great hunk of cheese could not assuage; he fidgeted continually, murmuring at intervals "C'te sacrée vermine"—a remark which produced a sympathetic echo from several others, and apprehensive shivers from my friend and myself. All at once he of the *Croix de Guerre* opened the flood-gates:

"Next time, me, I cross the frontier! Yes, I finish with this accursed game!" he announced to the company.

"Dis donc, mon copain!" said his opposite neighbour, leaning forward and patting him on the knee.

"Let them send those of sixty, and seventy—it is their turn now," he went on, "after three years one has had enough of it, I say."

His comrades did not laugh. His neighbour shook him by the shoulder as he would a man talking in his sleep: "T'en fait pas! T'as pas honte?" he glanced in our direction, but we both looked as unconcerned as the round loaves.

The victim of *le cafard* muttered gloomily like distant thunder.

"Dis donc—c'est de la quitter t'a donné le cafard," said the big fellow opposite, with an indulgent smile. Had he been his mother he could not have put more understanding into those few words, which being interpreted by Thomas Atkins would be, It's leaving *'er* as giv' you cold feet."

The case diagnosed, another of the party instantly came forward with the remedy :

"Ben ! Va te faire une cuite—y'a que ça pour le cafard," and he forthwith hauled out a huge evil-looking bottle, greeted with loud approval by all the company. In accordance with their unfailing politeness they first passed the healing potion to my friend and me. With profuse thanks and apologies on the score of temperance vows, we excused our sad lack of conviviality. The colour was ominous, the smell staggering, what the taste must have been could be dimly surmised from the effects on those who partook—the first result being a heavy drugged sleep, lasting alas ! but too brief a time. Over what followed it is best to draw a veil. We left at the first opportunity.

Le cafard, however, was cured—there seemed no doubt on that point, but it was like curing you of toothache by setting fire to your bed—attention was absorbed by the matter in hand, every faculty being strained to cope with the immediate claims of the situation.

. . . . . .

It is difficult to say where the *poilu* is seen at

his best. He is always such a gallant fellow, so human, so humorous, such a bewildering combination of the simplicity of six years old and the wisdom of sixty. Those who have stood side by side with him "going over the top" declare that then is his superbest moment, and that the Frenchman is a born soldier of the best fighting type all the world acknowledges and past history testifies. "He plays the game." His rules of warfare, like those of Mr Atkins, are based on fair play, and he is endowed by nature with an innate chivalry. Both in ideals and practice he is the exact opposite of the Teuton, that drilled machine of blood and iron, whose watchword is *Schrecklichkeit*, and whose courage waxes most tremendous in face of helpless girls, white-haired curés and wounded men.

To his beaten foe Monsieur Poilu is always magnanimous, and should he detect one spark of his own gallant spirit even in the Boche who has desecrated his soil and burnt his home, he is ready to take him by the hand. A typical instance was an occasion on which a company of Uhlans, having all except one decamped in face of overpowering numbers, the French soldiers surrounded this remaining one, standing to fight to the last, and, attacking him not with bayonets but cheers, cried: "Tu es un chic type—toi!" And then, to the grim Boche's amazement, carried him off to give him, instead of the bullets he expected, a feast of the best they could offer. The Teuton's war-book rigorously excludes

such wayside flowers of chivalry and it is doubtful whether the Uhlan did not despise them for it.

"So it is not written in our great text-book—but so makes one not war." The more easy-going Saxon might have appreciated such a spirit, but then he would never have stayed behind to face the foe single-handed. "Kamerad," he would have cried with both hands up—and I for one don't blame him.

That *le cafard* is a comparatively rare complaint is greatly owing to the extraordinarily stimulating influence of the officers on the men. There is combined with a good deal of military etiquette a spirit of camaraderie, even of affection, rarely found except in the French army.

The picturesque orders issued by the General Commanding the 12th Division at one time, when saluting was tending to get slack in some places, could only have been possible in France.

Clause 1 states, among other equally humoristic instructions, that the salute should be given "with true chanticleer spirit," while inwardly saying, "I am proud to be a *poilu*!" "Imperceptibly lower the chin," goes on Clause 2, "carry a smile in the eyes and say to yourself—having your superior in mind—'You also are a *poilu*—you rate and swear at me sometimes, but never mind, you can depend on me.'"

The third Clause calls for the drawing up of oneself to full height, and the expansion of one's chest accompanied by the inward cry of "On les aura, les salauds!"

Clause 4 applies to officers. "Envelop the soldier

in an affectionate look while returning his salute, then with your eyes gazing frankly into his say inwardly—"Thanks to you, comrade, we'll master the German pigs!"

The spirit of chivalry in the French soldier, and the spirit of levity—irrepressible levity—characteristic of the British Tommy, are traits which always completely baffle the Hun. Neither the one nor the other is provided against in his War-book. He begins by disbelieving in their existence; and when therefore forced to face these abnormal characteristics in so-called men of war, he regards them as *camouflage*, disguising treachery and trickery of the subtlest description. This also leads him into false situations, for, notwithstanding his chivalry, the French soldier kills. Oh yes, he is out to kill Boches—as many as possible, and as effectively as possible. He is not too anxious to take prisoners either, after three years grim struggle with his remorseless, treacherous foe. He is fighting for his life, for the life of France, for all he holds dear—inch by inch driving the foe off his soil, holding the grey swarms at bay with a living wall of the sons of France. As he leaps over the top, the *poilu* gives his life gladly for the noblest idea that has ever possessed his simple soul. Under such an inspiration undoubtedly he is superb as a soldier.

Personally, however, never having had the chance of seeing him in the trenches and in the firing-line, my experience can only take him up a few hours

later upon a stretcher in the sorting station, gravely wounded—or in the ambulance, awaiting another fiery ordeal. And seeing him under these latter circumstances it seems to me that nowhere does the *poilu* show a finer fellow than in hospital. His courage never fails. He never grumbles, however bad things are, and only those who have had to cope with the awful difficulties of receiving the wounded, as they arrive at the field hospitals in their thousands, know what those sufferings, of necessity, are. Scarcity of nurses, of doctors, of chloroform, of beds, of bandages, of pillows, of everything. Yet how wonderful those wounded are! Ignoring suffering, a grievously wounded giving place to a comrade whose case is worse even than his, a one-legged helping the blind—and through it all, joking and smiling. Oh! that wonderful smile of the wounded *poilu*! The courage of it is almost heart-breaking. For it is a smile without effort, coming just as straight from the heart as light from a lamp. Most inner lamps get dimmed by the wearing pain of sleepless nights, of train journeys which are sheer torture to shattered limbs and gaping wounds, but as the Croix Rouge nurses or English V.A.D.'s help Monsieur Poilu out of the train, he assures them he is getting on famously, and as they lay him on the floor-bed, with a straw *traversin* under his head, to wait for the doctor, he will assure them he does not suffer "too much" (*pas trop*) and will smile an *au revoir* full of gratitude and cheerfulness.

His reluctance to give trouble is another lovable trait. He will often disguise his wounds and his sufferings like a veritable Spartan boy, and this in spite of loving to be spoilt and cosseted as much as any baby. Especially this is the case at night, when the business-like military nurses, or efficient Croix Rouge ladies retire, and the night duty will be taken by a gentle sister of St Vincent de Paul or the Augustine nursing-order. On these occasions Monsieur Poilu shows himself a pastmaster in the gentle art of malingering.

I know one hospital where the signal for the night nurse's appearance was a chorus of piteous sighs and moans, many of the patients drawing the sheets over their faces as if their last hour were at hand. The night nurse was an English woman of sympathetic, and it was hoped, equally unsuspecting disposition, "A hot compress" for one, "a cold compress for another," "a little lemonade for that one," and "a little massage." Oh, just two little moments to keep her near him—for this big child!

Going from one bed to another she gave to each one what he needed—namely, the feeling of being mothered, which sometimes included a maternal scolding, producing in Monsieur Poilu the happy sensation of being once more just seven years old.

One night a voice called to her from among the new arrivals.

"Mademoiselle speaks with an English voice! Me, I know many English people." This of course

drew her to his bedside. "All the English they visited our hotel at Mont St Michel. My mother she was well known—famous even! No one like her for the omelettes!"

"Madame Poulard!" cried the V.A.D., as a recollection of that high-priestess of the omelette rose before her, standing by the wide, open fireplace in the old inn, manipulating with consummate dexterity the largest omelette in the largest frying-pan ever seen on this globe, tossing the golden, bubbling, flapping thing of eggs and butter, without breaking it, like the conjuror she was, while the firelight played on her beautiful, glowing face.

"She was famous not only for the omelettes, but for a face so beautiful, so charming, Madame your mother," said the English V.A.D., "that no artist could see her without desiring to paint her. Many would travel to Mt. St Michel to taste the famous omelettes just in order to see that lovely face."

"Ma foi, oui!" said her son, "the English, the Americans, as well as the French, all made pictures of *Maman*, but the omelettes they were superb and alone worth a visit." He could not allow a second place to those omelettes, and no doubt felt this also had been *Maman's* view.

He was the envy of the whole ward, he who had known how "to invent" as they maliciously called it, this "history of mothers and omelettes," a history so interesting as to keep the night nurse quite ten minutes by his bedside—the cunning scoundrel!

A chorus of sighs and moans began to echo round the ward again. It was wonderful to see how the pain seemed to be wiped out of his face as the wounded man talked of his beautiful *Maman*, and he turned to sleep with a happy sigh—no doubt to meet her in his dreams that night.

The V.A.D. found herself beset with questions as to other parts of France which, perchance, she had visited, and other *Mamans* she might have met. Deep were the sighs when she had to confess the limitations of her travels.

. . . . . .

The *poilus*' devotion to the nurse shows in the keen rivalry displayed to serve her. She has only to ask for another convalescent to act as orderly to have an embarrassment of choice. Shattered legs and arms, pierced lungs are impetuously forgotten. Firmly the nurse has to refuse the offers of help. "Thou for example! convalescent indeed! scrub the floor! not just yet *mon petit*—for a week it is forbidden even to sit up, do you hear?" And when the doctor asks for volunteers to give blood for exhausted veins, or skin to grow over torn flesh, those who press forward in eager competition with their offerings, cause even the doctor sometimes to turn aside with "a stupid something in his eye."

Réné Benjamin's "Gaspard," slipping out of bed at midnight to go out of doors and imitate the cock-crow for which his dying comrade was longing,

is a typical act of the devotion the *poilu* is always ready to show to his wounded *copain*. . . .

The scene is in hospital at night. They have drawn the screen round the dying young soldier. His life is ebbing painfully, but he feels if only he can pass through the ordeal of this long night all will go well with him. Anxiously, he asks the nurse: "Say then, my sister—is it soon four o'clock?"

Knowing this longing of the dying for the dawn, she answers, prompted by a divine pity: "Yes, *mon petit*—a little more courage and soon the night is over."

The dying man groans. "But there's a cock—a cock who crows at four o'clock. . . ."

All his soul is listening for that sign of the coming dawn.

Then "Gaspard," lying in the next bed, wounded in the thigh, sits up, draws on his trousers, and on all-fours, manages to reach the door unseen. In two minutes a cock is distinctly heard—a somewhat quavery, hoarse, not to say human, cock-crow, to anyone listening with critical attention; but the dying man drinks in the sound, as one parched with thirst a cup of spring water.

"Sister, do you hear?" he cries joyfully.

"Did I not tell you," she answers, "it is four o'clock."

Calm and confidence descend upon his spirit. The dreaded night has passed. He closes his eyes and gently, almost smiling, he dies.

The effort costs "Gaspard" dear. His wound reopens, and fever sets in. The doctor is furious, but what matter, the cock had served his purpose.

It is only because I fear no translator will be found to undertake the impossible task of Anglicising the idiom of "Gaspard" that I have ventured to quote this little gem for the benefit of those who are debarred from the joy of making "Gaspard's" acquaintance.

Perhaps the greatest test of the *poilu's* serene cheerfulness comes when he is convalescent, and realises that for the rest of his life he is maimed, crippled, or blinded—sometimes even a more terrible fate has to be faced—disfigurement. If one would learn to what sublime heights of courage the man who "does his bit" can rise, it is necessary to go among these latter. Very gently, these most piteous cases are led back to life. In the *ateliers* attached to many of the military hospitals, they learn first of all to be able to face each other and their teachers, and gradually the outside world. Interest in learning a new trade after a time not only diverts, but mercifully absorbs their thoughts. They find happiness in their companions in misfortune, and so strong is the youth and power of enjoyment within them, that they take up their lives with courage and keen interest, even when the disfigurement is so terrible that at first one questions if it would not have been more merciful to let death come, instead of using every means to avert it. Those who work among them, however, have no doubt or misgivings on the question.

This splendid branch of hospital work was first started by Mme Viviani, wife of the former Prime Minister, and many French ladies assist in teaching and amusing the wounded and maimed in these curative *ateliers*, for the employment is chosen with the view of helping recovery.

It was with one of these workers I visited the *ateliers* attached to the big Military Hospital of Val de Grace, in Paris. We were accompanied by a rich lady of Brazil in whose sumptuous, white satin car we drove to the hospital, the idea being that some of the superfluous Brazilian dollars might be induced to flow into this beautiful channel. Whether they did so I never heard. We found every variety of work going on, carpentering, carving, saddle-making, typewriting. Legs requiring muscular development were set to work on sewing machines with treadles, arms needing vigorous exercise were supplied with bales of flannel to cut up into shirt lengths with a sword—very popular work this, recalling no doubt reminiscences of the German trenches. So much less dull than doing gymnastic exercises, for, in this way, you are killing, not only two birds but three, with one stone, the work being useful, medicinal, and remunerative. On arriving at the *atelier* of "the disfigured," the Brazilian lady paused before the door and remarked that she trusted she was not going to see any terrible sights—to that she could not consent—"her heart was too tender and it would affect not only

her stomach but her sleep." Such an unthinkable calamity was of course not to be contemplated for a single moment, and she was begged to repose herself in the satin-lined car, while we of sterner stuff entered that domain of heroic suffering and victorious achievement.

The impulse to protect her interior from *malaise* and her sleep from haunting dreams was not without justification. The difficulty in dealing with her had been a doubt whether, without some such insistent haunting, the dollars could be induced to flow from her pocket. Oh those tender hearts! So tender they cannot bear sight or sound of suffering lest it should hurt themselves by even so much as a vibration " visiting them too roughly." The grim doctrine of re-incarnation combined with the excellent régime of Mrs Be-done-by-as-you-did is a consoling thought when one is confronted with these " tender hearts " and tight purse strings.

Many of those tragic cases of disfigurement included loss of sight. These, as soon as their wounds are healed, are specially provided for in other houses. One of the many schools for the blind is at Reuilly, formerly a large convent, standing in its own grounds. It is one of twenty French " St Dunstans."

Like the blind Tommy who blesses Sir Arthur Pearson for his Braille watch on arriving in hospital at home, so the blinded *poilu* rejoices in the first gift to greet him—this same little friend who helps him through the long nights of sleeplessness, from

which so many of those blinded heroes at first suffer. For when there is no day to alternate the night, the night ceases to be a repose, and becomes often an intolerable weariness—a menace to sleep. And the little watch—Oh how he blesses the little watch as he passes his fingers over its face, and it tells him the night is passing, and the dawn coming! Even though he cannot see the glory of the rising sun, the colours that are flashing over the horizon, he feels the light and rejoices in the day. Blessed is the inventor of that little watch, whose friendly tick and steadily moving hands give the blinded man a sense of companionship all through those long nights.

"It takes on a veritable personality as of a human friend," said one of these blinded victims, lovingly stroking the disc.

. . . . . .

"The best teachers of the blind are the blind themselves," said an instructor at Reuilly, who spends his life among the blinded *poilus*, teaching them diamond-cutting, a trade from which one would think of all others blindness must debar them—yet in which many excel.

"They acquire fingers of a precision, of an exactitude, so fine, one may truly say the sense of touch has replaced that of sight," said their teacher.

It was interesting to see how the first steps were taken on pieces of steel on which they learnt to cut the many facets of the diamond, gradually reducing

the size till the pupil learnt to feel and actually *see*, with his sensitive finger-tips.

In another workroom a very cheerful party were doing basket work and rushing chairs, under the direction of a blind teacher. One of them, hearing that in English villages it is difficult to find anyone who can do rushing—almost a lost art now—volunteered to come over as soon as he had found a nice little wife to go with him, about which he anticipated no difficulty.

"I should like to travel—to see other countries—it gives to think—it enlarges the ideas—at Commines I saw many English and I liked them well—*sont de chics types—les Anglais*," he added cordially.

I told him he and his *petite amie* must begin learning English at once, for no one in the English village I feared could speak French, and a picture of the utter isolation and desolation which would overtake the sunny-hearted children of France in the damp mists of a long English winter rose before me.

"Ah, that is not difficult!" he cried hopefully. "The English language it is very amusing—I know already some words, and one time I could even sing that *drôle* canticle of Saint Tippéraire which in 1914 sang all the English army."

He evidently regarded it as the national anthem. I wondered how far it would take him in the English village; in Ireland, perhaps, it might go quite a long way towards opening doors and hearts to the "furriner," but what of Suffolk or Surrey?

He refused to give us a verse of Saint Tippéraire, but they struck up some trench songs—real *poilu* songs, both grave and gay. "Rosalie c'est ton histoire"—"Verse à boire," etc.—and the ever popular "Auprès de ma Belle," and "Ma 'mie." Mostly they revolved around *ma 'mie* that day, perhaps because started by our friend whose mind was clearly working round that idea. All have a little "promised one," or hope soon to have her—*une petite femme* being as necessary a part of daily life as daily bread, and daily sun. Fortunately there is always a girl ready in France as in England to marry a blind soldier.

Yet home life, however happily he may be mated, is not enough for the blind *poilu*. He needs the comradeship of his brothers in affliction. Only so does he lose that sense of loneliness and isolation, which means *feeling* the darkness. To be the one blind man at the table, in the workshop, the yard, this places him apart, but where all are blind there is no loneliness. Together they can even joke over their blind blunders—the stumbles and falls. They will play tricks, set traps for each other like schoolboys, our guide told us.

"You see that little fellow with the curly head over there—the wag of that group—where he is there is always a joke. He returned home in July, he was cured, he had learnt well his trade and could make a living. His parents are small proprietors in Touraine—there is a large family of whom he is the eldest adored son. After two months I receive

a letter praying me to take him back here—he will do any work only to be again among his *camarades*—down there with all those who have their eyes, it is too *triste* for him—he can no longer bear his life—sooner would he finish it."

And this our guide assured us was no exceptional case but the rule, and to make a possible life for these blinded men, working centres should be established where, while living in their homes, they could spend their working hours together.

It would seem too that music should be made a special feature in their lives, for there is no doubt that to the blind it takes on a new power and significance. Even to those who have always loved music where linked to song and dance, it opens up new fields—new vistas of unsuspected joys and emotions. One has only to take some of these blind soldiers to a really good orchestral concert to realise this fact. Music which would undoubtedly have been far over their heads before the darkness fell upon them, now admits them to a new world. They discover a hitherto unknown faculty for mental picturing, the distracting physical vision of audience and performers being removed. However plain, commonplace, or unintellectual those young faces may be, while listening to such music as a Beethoven Symphony or a Wagner overture, I have seen a sort of shining intelligence so transfigure them that one hardly misses the eyes over which the lids are closed in absorbed enjoyment.

"It is as though the music seems to chase away the darkness into which one is accustomed to gaze, it fills all with colour and movement," explained one whose temperament was only by slow and painful steps adjusting itself to that same physical blackness. It is a blessed fact that colour does in a mysterious sense still exist for the blind. One man learning the trade of flower-making, most suitably, since he had formerly been a gardener, declared he could feel the difference between a white and a crimson carnation—and when tested proved it. We talked a good deal about the mysterious side of this wonderful sense of sight. I told him of my old friend, Sir Edwin Arnold, who bore like a soldier-hero the four years' darkness which struck him at the end of life—struck him yet never felled him, for paralysed and blind he worked and wrote and studied up to the last. One night he had a strange experience often repeated afterwards.

He woke, and found on opening his eyes that he could see. He sat up and gazed round in amazement—the room was filled with a soft light. He was in his accustomed bedroom, but the walls were hung with beautiful oriental draperies, and pictures bearing inscriptions in Sanscrit and Japanese lettering. Amazement and joy almost overcame him, he could see again! For that this was sight restored he did not doubt at first. Only when as a test he put up his hand in front of his face, and could not see it, did he realise this vivid picture was a vision

in which the physical eyes had no part. Yet he was not sleeping or dreaming, that he proved by calling his servant and making him write down all he saw still at the moment of describing it. This seeing without the aid of physical sight proved a great consolation to Sir Edwin. It suggested a glimpse of other possibilities, of faculties belonging to another plane of existence, of senses not necessarily limited to the orthodox five.

It appears without doubt in the case of the blind that the remaining senses compensate them by an extraordinary access of activity, specially those of touch and hearing. Even taste and smell play their extra part; a blind man will detect an escape of gas by both these latter senses, long before the average person with sight.

The garden at Reuilly was a source of great delight to the blind *poilus*. They felt the beauty of it—the scent and touch of a rose opened out a vista of all the glories of summer. It was touching to see the extreme care and tenderness with which they passed their fingers over flowers and plants as though fearing to hurt them. Many were training to be gardeners and learning horticulture. It seems to give them special joy to be with living, growing things. Perhaps they get a subtle sense of companionship out of the sprouting plant, the growing tree, the little living tip piercing up through the soil; for it is companionship the blind soldier—perhaps all the blind—are always seeking. Having this one

boon it is a constant source of wonder to all those who visit them to see their courage and serenity, even their high spirits and joy in life. Dancing, singing, swimming, boating—there is nothing they will not do—and do well. To anyone needing courage to go on with life and show a brave front to the world, there is nothing like a visit to Reuilly or St Dunstan's.

Before tearing myself away from the beloved Monsieur Poilu there is one variety of him whose praises I must not leave unsung—the *poilu* priest. It is difficult to estimate what he has done to revivify the religious life of France, and to re-establish the waning influence of his Church. For it is undeniable that before the Great War there was a general feeling of stagnation and decay about the Church in France, she seemed to be losing her hold over the people while the *franc-maçon*, the free-thinking materialist, was gaining ground. But the war gave the priest a great opportunity, and he took it. Here was his chance to show that to be a Christian priest did not make a man either a weak-kneed soldier or a lukewarm patriot. It was of course no question of choice for those of military age, the priest coming under the Military Service Act precisely as every other fit son of France, and serving as *simple soldat*, those who attained officer rank being *aumôniers*, those picturesque medieval-looking figures in black, mounted on their dignified chargers who are seen not only passing up and down among

the field hospitals and rest camps behind the lines, but in the firing-line and trenches at the front.

Monsieur l'Aumônier bears no arms, but on his breast gleams a big cross which must often have been a good mark for the enemy sniper. His duties are to bring the consolations and ministrations of the Church to her fighting sons. Kneeling by the wounded and dying he may be seen while the shrapnel bursts all round him, hearing a last confession and administering the sacred rites. Before going into action in the dim hours at dawn he holds the solemn early mass in the little barn or outhouse extemporised as a chapel. Those services have sent out the poilu to fight and die with a soul washed clean, in a white heat of faith and self-sacrifice. Between two *poilu* priests we met in the train an interesting discussion took place as to the effect of obligatory service on the position of the priest. Both men were about thirty—on the rising side *nel mezza Cammin del nostra vita.* They were coming from the front on their seven days' leave. One wearing the uniform of the Chasseurs Alpins had the air of a scholar, borne out by a little leather-bound volume from which he read passages now and then to his companion, a powerful, bearded *brancardier* (stretcher-bearer) decorated with the *Médaille Militaire.*

Something in the little volume gave the text, and the Chasseur priest began:

"I have nothing to say against the priests serving

in the army as *aumônier*—as officer—that is well—very well—one is mounted on a horse. . . ."

"That raises you at once above your fellows," laughed the jolly *brancardier*.

The other went on without heeding this levity:

"The uniform is distinctive — impressive — the cross on your breast marks you as one set apart—an officer in the army—yes—the army of the King of Kings. But to wear the uniform of the simple *poilu*"—he cast a deprecating glance at his own legs—"to share his life in closest intimacy—to be under orders to any young officer—a pert boy of twenty—*Non, par exemple!*—a thousand times no—this is to lower the high prestige of the priesthood."

"Well, *mon ami*, that is not my experience—and, after all, the experience it is which convinces more than arguments or reason," replied the *brancardier*. "I find on the contrary that a priest he remains always a priest for all, even those without religion, whether his costume be that of the *soutane* or the *poilu's* "horizon bleu." To share the lot of the simple *soldat* that it is which makes one to know his heart. As officer—there is a barrier always—the *aumônier* never can he be as a brother."

The Chasseur shook his head and smiled: "Ah, my friend you are democrat—socialist almost! Me, I believe in retaining a little barrier, having around one a certain atmosphere, so to speak, of mystery and awe which appeals to the imagination. It is this which gives to us the power to counsel—to guide.

We must be not only brothers in Christ remember, but fathers in God. The Kingdom of Heaven is not a democracy—it is a hierarchy."

And looking at the clean-cut, refined, ascetic face, the high-bridged nose, penetrating, close-set eyes and determined chin of the Chasseur, the broad brow, kindly eyes and gallant bearing of the *brancardier*, one realised that both these types have found a sphere of invaluable service in the armies of France, both have exerted in their distinctive ways, incalculable influence for good. It is true, as many have testified, that in the trenches there were no atheists. Undoubtedly one reason for this might be found in the regenerating effect of that gallant figure of the *poilu* priest "running like a spark among the stubble," sharing the hard life, the same rations—or lack of rations—the same pests, the same dangers, meeting the same grim form of suffering and death with cheerfulness, courage and faith—a faith amazingly contagious in that it restored to the *poilu* something he had learnt at his mother's knee, and never quite forgotten. One who has no doubts, no fears, no misgivings as to the righteousness of his cause, of the Angels fighting with him, and his military service being, as Krishna said to Arjuna, "a sacrifice of arms demanded of the gods," creates around him without any word of preachment an atmosphere in which faith germinates and courage takes heart of grace.

When volunteers have been needed for special danger work, an advance patrol, a reconnoitring

expedition, a rescue party, stretcher-bearers to cross a barrage of fire, the *poilu* priest has been ever to the fore, "first over the top" his motto. The unusual proportion of awards for valour, *Croix de Guerre*, *Médailles Militaires*, *Citations*, awarded to the priests serving in the ranks, bear witness to this.

Those who had formerly been wont to regard priests as "eaters of the poor," proud prelates whose perfunctory washing of the beggars' feet on Maundy Thursday was the one travesty of service and humility of which they were capable, were amazed to find that there positively existed priests occupying high positions in the Church ready to live up to their precepts quite literally, and to be in deed, not word only, the servants of all. It revolutionised the popular idea of the priest and the Church.

Imagine the effect in the British army if not only all the curates of the Church of England had served as Tommies but if, say, the Archdeacon of Westminster and the Dean of Durham had been found working as orderlies, scrubbing the floors and emptying the slop-pails at the Second London General and the Military Hospital at Durham. Yet these are but everyday occurrences in France.

There was the Vicaire-Générale of the Archévêque de C——. a dignified and splendid personage even in the uniform of the *poilu*, black-bearded and bronzed, with a voice which involuntarily called up a cathedral, even when making a joke. He was known as "Monseigneur," and his influence was compelling

as that of the Pied Piper. But when I first saw him he was wielding a broom, and in a way that proclaimed him no novice in the art of sweeping.

After watching the thoroughness of his work I complimented him on his mastery of a job so outside his profession.

"It is not quite in vain I have heard my good Joséphine, she who takes care of me and my little *presbytère*, instructing and correcting the *femme de ménage* these fifteen years past," said he. "Ah, but I much doubt whether I have yet attained to her standard of cleanliness—it is a woman of high ideals, the old Joséphine!"

I enquired whether she approved of her master's present employment. He looked round nervously and lowered his voice:

"She knows not that I have attempted to undertake this work, I live in fear she may descend suddenly upon me and discover it. She would regard it with displeasure."

"Finding it was beneath your dignity of course?"

"All to the contrary," he laughed. "Joséphine she would fear that I might in this *métier* descend to the mediocre—that which she abhors. She requires of me, see you, that I should merit the gold medal in everything that I perform—nothing less satisfies her; that I obtain *not* the gold medal is merely by reason of the injustice of a wicked, envious world. If I write a book she is convinced no man ever wrote a book so remarkable—if I give a discourse on theology it is superior in wisdom to all the dis-

courses of the year—when I join the army and shoulder a rifle the soldiers will now see how to kill the *sales Boches* as they *ought* to be killed. The same will apply to this broom—with this difference that in this work she is in a position to criticise. Ah, but it is a great effort to maintain the Alpine heights of the standards of Joséphine!"

He turned to his broom with renewed energy, the voice of old Joséphine clearly ringing in his ears.

His first year's service had been in the trenches —weeks together, knee-deep in mud. Frozen feet and severe rheumatism had driven him to the rear. But so soon as he could stand he found work in the big evacuation hospital and sorting station at the back of the lines; sometimes doing clerical work, by which was meant taking copies of the wounded men's *fiches*—name, regiment, and nature of wound, as they were brought in, sometimes giving first aid by cutting off boots or applying drops to gassed eyes and giving anti-tetanus injections when the convoys come in so fast doctors and nurses could not cope with them. At other times he worked in the wards as orderly, while on Sundays he became a priest, bicycling to a far distant village to take early mass for a flock left without a shepherd.

"Les curés, sais-tu, c'est rudement chics les curés"—was the verdict of an anti-clerical *poilu* surprised out of his pre-war prejudices by coming up against the Vicaire-Générale in his many and divers capacities at the evacuation ambulance.

PARIS IN WARTIME

It was a strange new Paris, as wholeheartedly given up to war as she had in other days been to pleasure. The *Ville Lumière* was in twilight, but in no way depressed on that account. Dancing, singing, and feasting were replaced by untired zealous work. Everyone shoulder to shoulder uniting in the one supreme task, ready to sacrifice everything—many having already done so—*pour la patrie!*

Visitors to London were often heard to say that except for the air raids in the darkened streets they would hardly have known there was a war on in which England was fighting for her existence. In Paris from the day of the mobilisation, there was no room for doubt. It was curious to walk down the Champs Élysées and note the transformation—the long avenue on both sides given up to *œuvres* (works), the nature of which was indicated by flags of every nationality, British, American, Belgian, Italian, Serbian, Montenegrin, hanging out their colours. There was an *œuvre* for *Blessés*, *Mutilés*, *Éclopés*, *Reformes*, for *Orphelins Français*, *Belges*, etc., for *Prisonniers* and *Réfugiés*. The Grand Palais was converted into huge workshops where all sorts of trades were being taught to the wounded, sufficiently convalescent to

come daily from their hospitals and attend the classes where they could become blacksmiths, saddle-makers, carpenters, glassblowers, tailors, anything they fancied, and from the start have the satisfaction of earning money.

Service and official cars, Red Cross lorries and transports were the only conveyances to be seen racing up and down the broad avenues. Gone were the smart equipages and autos—gone the smart Parisiennes and the smart dandies who watched them admiringly—gone even the laughing children and their gay-ribboned *nou-nous* (nurses).

In the theatres and restaurants one saw mostly strangers, English and American officers with only a sprinkling of *horizon bleu* on leave—no doubt because the latter preferred their own homes when near at hand, and their womenfolk were in no mood for going out. In the year 1917 it was difficult to find a family that was not in mourning. The first thing which struck one in the streets of Paris was the number of black-robed figures, with the long black veil which to English eyes makes every woman look like a widow. In France the veil is worn equally for a son or a parent.

If you wanted to find a concourse of the women of Paris, however, you had but to go into the churches. There you would see them not only flocking in crowds on Sundays and feast-days but at any hour every day, passing in and out, women of every class, from the great lady, very plainly garbed, to the market woman,

basket by her side, kneeling at the side altars absorbed in prayer.

I went to the Madeleine one Sunday morning. This new Paris showed an impressive assembly crowded with these black-robed women—anyone in bright colours was sure to be a foreign bird of passage. There were even more men than women—men in every variety of uniform, Chasseurs Alpins, Aviateurs, Zouaves, Staff officers and *poilus*, side by side—a true democracy as the Church should be.

The war had touched the tongue of the preacher as with a coal of fire. His sermon was of the one great subject—aims and ideals of the war, service and self-sacrifice, comfort for the bereaved, reality of the supernatural all around us. So different from the old doctrinal discourses of other days—the dreary hammering in of theology—only the real things mattered now.

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Among my own special friends there was hardly one whom the terrible war had spared—none of course whose menkind were not in hourly danger. All were working, either in hospitals or war workrooms, teaching, amusing the wounded, or engaged in one of the endless *œuvres* of which Paris was the centre. Not only was their work urgently needed, but for themselves it was their salvation. As one gallant old lady of seventy-eight said to me, for two years going every day to her war workroom, never missing a day:

"When one has lost all, and is quite alone in the

world, then is the time one must not lose courage. Oh no! For the sake of those who have given their lives, we too must have courage to the end."

One rarely saw any wounded in the streets of Paris —the ambulance cars went by night I was told. The killed and wounded were so numerous it was a significant fact that, unlike our English papers with their daily "Roll of Honour," the French papers never published the figures. It would have appalled the nation had they done so, and caused a depression which might have had disastrous effects; for the French losses it must be remembered were, in proportion, infinitely greater than our own great losses.

But in spite of the individual sorrow and loss from which no one was exempt, there was a quite extraordinary atmosphere of quiet confidence, of equilibrium in the French capital. When good news came, no burst of joy and boasting, when reverses were announced, no depression or loss of courage, rather an addition of grim resolve, a greater output of steadfast faith in ultimate victory. Undoubtedly the presence of the Americans aided in producing this effect. Though but a small number were yet actually in the firing-line, it was the moral rather than the material help which proved of such value. They realised that victory was only a question of time.

Still the noble figures of "Lille" and "Strasburg" in the Place de la Concorde wore their draperies of crape, but with the eye of faith we saw them before long garlanded with flowers holding high the flag of France.

FEAST OF THE TOUSSAINT

This has always been kept as a solemn feast day throughout France, but the war has made it the great Day of the year—to remain so always for all those who have lived through the great ordeal.

Formerly it was to all, whether orthodox Catholic or unorthodox Freethinker, the Day of Remembrance dedicated to *nos chers morts*. To the devout Catholic it was besides a tryst, a day of special meeting, when, on the ladder of love, uniting this earth and the heavenly spheres, the beloved departed and the mourning earth-dwellers met and held sweet communion, prayer ascending and descending like the angels of God.

The war has made this Day of Days of an added significance to all. It has become impossible to think of that great company of splendid youth, gone over in the full tide of buoyant joyous life and vigour, as the "dead." *Nos chers morts* is unthinkable as applied to them. There was "no dying" in their case—no sickness or decay, no age and waning powers. Death touched them so swiftly with "the might of his sunbeam" that it was a translation—like Elijah they were caught up living to continue the fight for Right on the spiritual plane, where

the real war was being waged of which the earthly conflict was but the physical manifestation.

To us also, in Anglican England, this Day has taken on a new meaning with the spiritual awakening of the Great War. To pray for the "dead" was a custom which met with little favour in England or Scotland in pre-war days, but to pray for the living departed, those beloved ones so vitally, buoyantly alive only yesterday—how could any Church regulation or theological doctrine prevent the anguished heart going forth in prayer which must pierce the walls of jasper and storm the gates of heaven itself. Though they do not pray for the dead in English and Scotch churches the war has taught us to pray for the departed whether they set out on duty for Salonica, Mesopotamia, Flanders, or the longer journey—"Whereabouts Unknown."

And so we now see in one street after another in our austere, beloved old London, the strangely touching, foreign-looking little shrines with the long "Roll of Honour" where many of us have learnt for the first time to pray for the so-called dead, and some of us have learnt for the first time to pray at all.

Irresistibly the little London shrines seemed linked to the Paris cemeteries that day, as the songs of love and praise rose for that glorious company of young warriors of both lands. In France it would be hard to find a single home which has not one member—often alas many, *morts pour la patrie.*

The losses of France outnumber all others—the nation is truly decimated. Yet it is not as among the dead but the living that France thinks of her slain sons. *Morts pour la patrie*, yet not dead, but living, more vitally, truly living than we who remain. In Paris, as throughout the length and breadth of the land, the day is observed as a solemn feast. Shops are shut, churches are crowded all day long. Carrying wreaths and pots of flowers, never-ending processions wend their way to the cemeteries. Women in long black veils, little children, old men bent and white-haired, here and there an old couple arm in arm. "Que de fleurs! Que de pleurs!" as Pierre Loti says in his beautiful "Jours des Morts au Front"; for there too they were keeping the tryst with the departed, all along that grim line where the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—Sword and Sickness, Famine and Death—rode up and down, and back and forth unceasingly.

At the entrance to the Passy Cemetery I paused a moment at the big tomb and chapel of Marie Bashkirtseff, wondering to see she was still affectionately remembered, with fresh flowers and little words of loving regret. Strange, after all these years in a foreign land and at such a time of recent mourning in every home. Her name "immortal" says the inscription by André Theuriet. How absurd it sounds! Her gallant spirit no doubt—but her poor little name!

"Concession à perpétuité," on more than one

imposing tomb, struck another false note—curiously false in those days of real things, of rapid convulsive changes, when Paris was holding herself ready for anything, when the guns of the Hun any day might hammer on her gates, the bombs of the Hun liable any moment to create a huge crater where that consecrated spot stands with its "Concession à perpétuité."

"Hommages aux Soldats tués à l'ennemi," was inscribed on the flags, mounting guard over a big enclosure, covered with a mountain of fresh flowers. In a cemetery near by this homage was rendered also to the British soldiers. Many a French mother brought her offering and whispered a prayer for the English boys who had died so far from home; that enclosure where the Union Jack waved was a garden of flowers brought by French hands. With these links forged by mutual sympathy in sorrow and aspiration the *entente cordiale* has become a very living reality. Mothers all over the world speak the same language, and nothing has drawn the French so near to the English as this suffering of the mothers. Perhaps the women of Britain have not so vividly realised what the overwhelming losses of France have been—how could they do so since the French papers never published their losses! And we English do not visualise easily—we need facts in concrete form. The French had the war in concrete form on their own soil. They knew what the mothers and wives of England were endur-

ing. They saw the British wounded and dying—the pathetic little graveyards at the back of the lines with the crossed sticks and the little Union Jacks. They saw and they said: "Ah, the poor English mothers. They suffer even as we others!" And their hearts warmed towards those mothers across the Channel.

The prevailing note of the cemeteries that day, however, was not one of gloom. Sorrow there was of course, but, mingled with such an uplift of faith already passing into vision, of mourning which has found consolation, that one felt a kind of serene peace descending like dew, as one passed down those avenues of acacia-shaded tombs.

Only one sad grave, I remember, chilled the atmosphere of that sunny autumn day—a great slab of granite—no name—no date—only a shower of fresh chrysanthemums, golden, crimson, pink, and purple. But deeply engraved on the stone, as without doubt on the heart from which sprang the thought, were the words:

> "Tout est mystère
> Hormis notre douleur."

Yet the mystery of suffering is the greatest mystery of all! And when that is realised in all its significance, then, through the mystery of suffering pierce faint rays, showing colours in the darkness which seemed so unrelieved, so impenetrable. For mystery engenders the spirit of enquiry, of discovery; it is not

a final state but a fluid changing condition, and the first discovery one makes, the first ray that pierces our sorrow is that there may be a meaning at the back of it. The mystery of suffering is perhaps still unsolved, but not unsolvable.

Standing by this sad slab of granite I thought of one stricken family among my French friends of whom these words were tragically true. Of a happy circle of boys and girls just opening out in their first bloom and promise three years before so joyously, so brilliantly, all thought of war as far removed from their visions and projects as the wars of Charlemagne. And now, what is that home? Two young sons have been killed in action, the third and sole remaining one is a prisoner in the hands of a brutal foe, whose war code enjoins him to wreak his hate and spite on his defenceless prisoners of war. One young daughter is a war widow serving in a hospital at Salonica, another a nurse in the war zone at an ambulance constantly bombed by the enemy. The father fills every hour of the anxious days as they pass with incessant work, but the poor, poor mother, an invalid for many years, she who cannot drown her sorrow in work—the war like a flood has swept over her soul—and loss—loss—is the only thing of which she is as yet capable of being hourly conscious. Truly these words are engraved upon her heart: "Tout est mystère—Hormis notre douleur!"

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Many young aviators rest here. Their own propellers, quiet at last, keep watch over the hands that so skilfully, daringly, guided their flights across the sky. A chapel was dedicated to a whole group of fallen aviators of the Third Company—*Mort pour la patrie.*

Pour la patrie! You cannot go a step in France without being brought up sharp against this one absorbing, all engulfing aspect of the war. Herein lies a difference between England and France, wide as the poles apart. Nine out of ten of our brave Tommies would tell you that they "were blest if they knew what they were fighting for"—it never made them fight one whit less well, fortunately—so well no men fought better. But here in France there was no question in the mind of the simplest *poilu* as to what he was fighting for—*pour la patrie* is written not only on his grave but in his heart. And so no doubt would it have been on British hearts, Sinn Feiners included, had the savage hordes of the Hun taken possession of Lancashire, Yorkshire and a large slice of the Emerald Isle, with a Von Bissing and his kinsmen dispensing the law. Oh! men know what they are fighting for when the green beauty of their sunny land, their peaceful, well-kept homes are turned into a grey wilderness of charred ruins and bleeding tree-stumps, when the familiar church of their childhood lies in a heap upon the surrounding graves, and the white-haired curé has been shot against the wall—when their girls have

been dragged from their beds at dead of night and torn screaming from their agonised mothers to be deported to Germany to "work" for their savage captors. *Pour la patrie* is no sentimental poetic phrase, such as is very often conveyed by "King and Country" on English lips. The latter is a toast, *pour la patrie* is a dedication of life itself. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* breathes a high-souled ideal appealing to the Sir Philip Sidneys and their chivalrous descendants who volunteered in their thousands, forming an army of a spirit so invincible they saved the civilisation of the world in those first crucial days. For them it was sweet and seemly to die not only for their own country but even for another man's country, in her need. But *pour la patrie* expresses a sentiment at once more elementary—more fundamental, it sounds an imperative claim, a prior claim, on the heart's blood of every Frenchman. He draws in the significance of these words with his mother's milk. He is France and France is his—the very soil is his, her noble traditions, her sacred shrines, her glorious past, her long roll of immortal names of heroes, statesmen, artists—all are his, and in return she claims his sword to defend her in her hour of need. The man who would not die proudly, eagerly, is no true son, there is no place—not even the miserable "objectors'" internment camp—for him in France.

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Down the long avenues of fallen leaves I followed

with the black-robed crowd, turning off where I could into the little paths less frequented. Here and there the solitary figure of a young widow or an old man knelt by a newly-made grave with as yet nothing to mark it but the little tricolour starting out brightly among the wreaths and flowers. And suddenly the distant boom of guns broke the stillness of the place, and made the subdued whispers change to anxious questionings. One realised that even at that moment Frenchmen were laying down their lives in thousands as their bodies formed a living rampart against the oncoming Hun—a wall that will never be broken down, a wall whose breaches are filled up as fast as they are made, a wall that finally will fall upon and crush the accursed grey swarm of invaders, desecrators, destroyers, once and for ever rid the land of them; for that wall is composed not only of the bodies of young France, but welded together by the unconquerable spirit of the entire nation.

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"The booming—it is probably practice," said the sentinel at the entrance gate. "It is the voice of the War." The voice of the War—the ever-present, all-absorbing War!

THE MUSICIAN OF THE GREAT WAR

On All Saints' Day in whatever direction I went in Paris it was to meet César Franck with his message of courage and consolation.

The Great War called up not only its naval and military forces, but its statesmen, inventors, scientists, writers and artists, all those who could truly serve in the great hour of need. And so it came to pass that the call reached César Franck, and he came into his own at last, though his body had lain in the earth nearly thirty years and he had changed his world for one in which Conservatoire Directors cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

While here he was ahead of his time, and like all great spirits with a message for the world he sang to deaf ears and to ears untuned, who hearing, resented his inspired music as " an innovation."

At Notre Dame the beautiful uplifting strains of " Les Béatitudes " rang through the dim arches of the old cathedral, falling like a benediction on the kneeling crowds of black-robed people.

" Blessed are they that mourn—blessed, blessed—for they shall be comforted."

France was like Rachel, mourning for her slain children, but further on the winding road than poor

Rachel, heard the divine promise, brought to her on the wings of that inspired music, and found comfort. The tears which were falling from many eyes all round one, were healing tears that day, and many a sad face among the mourners as they streamed out, positively shone with a great peace, a quiet confidence. I was with one such, a French mother, whose firstborn, the light of her eyes, had been killed by German guns in the opening onslaught—one of those fine specimens of young France, chivalrous, noble, stainless, leaving a blank never to be filled in his home or in public life. It was at her request I went with her to hear the music which possessed such wonderful power to console the mothers of France. And hearing it as given that day I understood why César Franck was the chosen musician of the *Jour des Morts*.

Not only in the churches but everywhere he was to be heard. At the Grand Palais a vast throng attended a "Festival Franck" where his "Ruth," "Panis Angelicus" and "Choral Symphony" were given, while at the Salle Gaveau was another concert entirely devoted to his works.

Whether his versatile genius manifested itself in oratorio, symphony or opera, it had this quality—it radiated a kind of serenity and light which uplifted the soul, bringing not only comfort and consolation to the bereaved, but giving strength and vision to the fighting man strong in a righteous cause, and faith in ultimate triumphant victory to the wounded and dying.

That such a gift as Franck has left to the world should be practically still unknown in England is only in accordance with past tradition. How long I wonder will it be before the arches of Westminster Abbey will thrill to the sound of the glorious "Redemption" and "Béatitudes." No doubt it is true of music as of governments, that "every nation has that which it deserves," and we in England have not yet deserved these great masterpieces left to the world by the organist of Ste Clotilde.

Sainte Clotilde! How often I have stepped inside the quiet spacious church, standing aside from the noisy thoroughfares in its little green garden where his statue now presides, and listened if perchance I might hear some far-off, faint echoes of that divine music still clinging to the walls and arches which rang with it for thirty years. So steeped is the place in his memory, and so identified with his personality that marvellous organ, that it would never have surprised me had the instrument begun to speak of its own accord.

When Franck was appointed to Ste Clotilde he was just recovering from a severe illness brought on by overwork and many worries. Ste Clotilde came to him as a ray of light at a dark, depressing time, a calm haven ensuring him—not against toil, that he always had—but a small and certain means of livelihood. It was here that his art grew and unfolded year by year to ever greater beauty and perfection, but absolutely unrecognised in his lifetime except

by a small band of brilliant disciples, many of them now famous throughout the musical world, such as Vincent d'Indy, Ernest Chausson, Paul Dukas, Henri Duparc, Augusta Holmes, Charles Bordes and many others. Like Walther von der Vogelweide he was despised and rejected by the Meistersänger of the Conservatoire and all the official heads and directors of his art. When bidden to the feast prepared for them at his own house on the completion of his life's great work, the *chef d'œuvre*, "Les Béatitudes," thinking in the naïve simplicity of his heart it would give them pleasure to greet a work in which an artist had put his highest endeavour, his best and noblest thought, with one accord they all made excuse. The Minister of Fine Arts sent "sincere regrets," the Director of the Conservatoire had "another engagement," one had the grippe, and another a sick aunt.

Standing before the statue in the garden I thought of that deserted feast, and how twelve years after his death those same gentlemen who refused him recognition in his lifetime had all met there, heads uncovered, to do him honour—for not to have been present on such an occasion would have reflected on their own glory.

It was in Ste Clotilde he found that friend whose companionship blessed his daily life for thirty years—his wonderful organ—an instrument which even after fifty years retains its full freshness of tone and rich timbre. It was constructed by that master-builder Cavaillé-Coll, when at the zenith of his fame. To

César Franck it became as a living being, a responsive friend calling forth the tenderest affection, the most intimate understanding. The tie between him and his organ was like that between Orpheus and his lute.

" Si vous saviez comme je l'aime," he said to a friend. " Il est si souple à mes doigts et si doux a mes pensées."

And who can venture to say whether some soul did not in truth come into being born of the union of the two great artist spirits, builder and composer, who threw into the instrument so much of their own creative essence, even as Siegfried welded into his sword " Nothung " so much of himself that it became alive with his spirit.

This theory is quite in keeping with the testimony of those who had the joy of hearing the master's inspired improvisations—a spontaneous creation of music which impressed the listener with a feeling of being in the presence of some power almost supernatural, and gave to the spirit an uplift into serene spaces of light and beauty never to be forgotten. M. Vincent d'Indy declares when on rare occasions one of his pupils was called upon to replace the master detained by other work " it was with a kind of superstitious awe that pupil would venture to touch with his profane hands the quasi-supernatural being accustomed to vibrate, to sing, to weep, under the compelling influence of the great genius of whom it had become, so to say, an integral part."

His improvisations were one of the marvels of

his many-sided genius. Liszt himself, that great improviser, on one occasion his sole auditor in the empty aisles of Ste Clotilde, speaking afterwards of that hour in which he sat enthralled, and wrapt, listening to the music which passed spontaneously from the soul of the great artist through his organ, declared he had "no peer save Bach."

It was to his organ, this unfailing friend, Franck was wont to rush with the inspirations that frequently came to him during the night. Whether these inspirations were due to what R. L. Stevenson describes as "the little grey men" who carry on their silent, subliminal, creative work while the body sleeps, or whether the spirit, while still attached by the silver cord, rises in the night to the plane where dwell its kindred souls, holding sweet communion and bringing back to the earth like trailing clouds of glory some of the music of those spheres, who can say? César Franck himself clearly held that he was but the medium, the organ pipe as it were, through which these celestial messages passed.

A friend recounts how early one morning he met Franck dashing out of his house in the Boulevard St Michel oblivious of the world around him. The friend threw himself across his path, insisting on recognition.

"*Ha! mon ami*" cried Franck, seizing his arm, "have you a moment to spare? Then come with me to Sainte Clotilde, I have heard last night such celestial harmonies I must go at once and try to render them on my organ. Come with me."

The friend records that the gates of heaven swung open as the organ pealed forth under the compelling touch of the master. It was characteristic of his genial nature that Franck sought eagerly this human sympathy and understanding, gratefully accepting wherever he found it, though he was equally incapable of seeking popularity or writing to please the public—as incapable as a well of changing the water springing from its source.

Even to please his wife, between whom and himself there existed a lifelong, devoted affection, he could not alter a passage when once it had taken form as he heard it spoken by that inward voice. Mme Franck was a good musician and often helped him by preparing his young pupils for him. Following his work with keen interest she would listen from the adjoining room. Certain of his compositions would draw her like a magnet, and she would softly open a crack in the communicating door. But she was no blind or uncritical admirer, and any unusual passage, even of unusual beauty, met with her disapproval, her mind being of the conventional and slow-moving type. No pioneer, her temperament was for the beaten paths, and where she found herself there to remain. Any passage stamped with the cloven hoof of over-much originality would invariably bring her kindly, anxious face to the door with the remark: "Décidément, César, je n'aime pas ça."

And César would, by way of reply, just regard her with gentle serenity, and proceed quietly on his way,

being as powerless to oblige her by altering the offending passage as he would have been to alter the rather peculiar shape of his nose, had she proffered the request.

To the wide circle of his own family he was the sun and centre. All came to him whatever their needs. He lived in the midst of his boys and girls, working often under conditions which would have baffled any composer. His family circle comprised not only his own children, but Brissaud and de Monvel relations. During the summer vacation a large family party would take a small country house together at Grez or Nemours, within reach of the forest of Fontainebleau. There in the little salon overrun by young Brissauds, de Monvels and Francks, he would pace from the piano to the table jotting down his music, while at another table sat Dr Edouard Brissaud equally absorbed in his great Treatise on the Brain, both completely lifted above the din of *cache-cache* or *la chasse* as the cyclone of laughing children dashed in and out.

It was under such conditions one summer that he composed the exquisite little Organ Pieces for a young girl cousin engaged to play for the service in church, and unable to find anything "easy enough."

There is a portrait in the home of a member of his family which shows Franck to have borne a curious likeness to Beethoven—the same breadth of brow and general outline of head, but the expression of troubled spirit, fighting through obstacles, which

characterises Beethoven is replaced by an expression of wrapt aloofness with Franck. He too met lions in the way, but he had not the terrible trial of deafness to battle with, and he heard, both with soul and body senses, the divine music which lifted his spirit into the "serene spaces."

Perhaps nowhere can the loved presence and influence of the great master more vividly be felt than in the home of Mdlle Cécile de Monvel, the well-known pianist and teacher, sister of the famous artist Boutet de Monvel. She loves to tell how it was to the "Cousin Franck's" fostering care of her talent she owed everything in her early musical life. It was to this young cousin Franck dedicated his "Prelude Aria and Final" for piano.

"Another name appears on the cover," she smiled sadly. "Ah, how well I remember that day, as though it were yesterday, when he came to me with many excuses and explained how a great lady pianist had signified her royal wish to play the piece in public. What, alas, could he do? He was desolated to make a disappointment for his *petite cousine*. Of course I was obliged to pretend it made me nothing—that I was pleased about the great pianist, and the simple-minded Père Franck he never suspected that the music was soaked with my tears when he left—I was very young," she added apologetically.

Franck wrote but little for the piano, which all pianists deeply regret, but Mdlle de Monvel is a great artist, and with wonderful skill makes her piano

act as a miniature orchestra or an organ in reproducing the works of Franck. She can give her fortunate guest a veritable Festival Franck in that charming home of hers in the Rue Saint Honoré. Asked to play the music she loved best she began with her own special " Prelude Aria and Final." Before beginning the triumphant opening of the Final she observed, " This is what I should like to hear played when victory to our arms is at last proclaimed." The theme has in fact the same victorious ring sounded in Mrs Ward Howe's battle song, " Mine eyes have seen the coming of the Glory of the Lord."

An interesting feature of the master's music, of which she pointed out many instances as she played one thing after another from Symphonies, Chorales and Béatitudes, is his use of the same theme to express exact opposites. In the third Béatitude, for example, the melody of " Oh ! Reine implacable—Douleur," expressing the profoundest melancholy, suffering and sorrow, is the same which later on, with other harmonies and tempo, arises with an uplift into regions of divine consolation and hope, as though he would show that out of the dire sorrows and trials themselves God draws joy and peace passing human understanding. Again and again Franck uses this method in a significant manner, showing the underlying thought in all his musical creations.

On one occasion, in accordance with a promise to play me the famous Sonate for violin and piano dedicated to M. Isaye, Mdlle de Monvel was assisted

by a boyish young officer who had passed eight months in the fiery ordeal of Verdun. While lying severely wounded he had been taken prisoner by the Germans, but had managed to escape from his Hun captors, falling out of the ambulance in the dark. A first prizeman of the Conservatoire, he promises, if his life is spared, to be in the foremost rank of violinists. I asked him if he could have played the Sonata just like that before Verdun.

He answered slowly: "Nothing is quite the same after one has passed through the experience of Verdun. One is not studying music down there—and yet one is learning how to play the violin—how to express such thoughts as Franck has here—as never before one could have expressed them."

The Sonata as he played it was the story of a soul descending into a veritable inferno of anguish, yet never succumbing, but made strong by the purifying fires and rising at last into regions of light and joy unspeakable.

For Franck never leaves the soul in Hell, and the last movement of the Sonata opens with all the serenity and hope of the new life, hope justified in victorious resurrection as surely as the dark drear winter is justified by the miracle of spring. Franck was the prophet of that hour. Out of his own heart's knowledge, sufferings, struggles and victories he wrought his own imperishable works, and because he had known his *Dies Iræ*, yet never lost the vision of the beyond, but heard through all the din of hostile

voices, all the disappointments and bereavements of life, the voice of Him who uttered the Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted," for this reason he came to be the musician of France, stricken yet unconquerable, in her *Dies Iræ*.

THE WOMEN OF FRANCE

In Paris it was brought home to me as never before what French women were doing—the part they were playing in the Great War. I had seen them in the provinces acting as mayors of towns and villages, as postmistresses, college and school teachers, and heard of many taking the place of their absent husbands as heads of commercial houses and working large farms, but it was in Paris I got in touch with the mainsprings of women's work all over the country.

"And what are French women doing?" asked a recently arrived American lady wanting to know all about it.

"They are keeping the country going," answered an English officer whose business it had been to travel the length and breadth of France for three years of wartime. And this verdict has been unanimously confirmed by their own countrymen of all professions.

When the call to mobilise rang like a thunderclap through France, it was answered not only by the men, but also by the women, to whom a similar call was addressed by the Prime Minister through the Press. Women of all ranks and of every occupation, whether among the *noblesse* and *bourgeoisie*, the professional, commercial or agricultural classes, rose up and

responded with a burst of patriotic enthusiasm, an ardent desire to serve, only to be found in a democratic country where national service is regarded as the highest duty of every man, and to give ungrudgingly her dearest for such service, the imperative duty of every woman. And more, not only to buckle on the sword of her departing sons with words of high courage, but promptly to take his place at the desk, the plough, the task of whatever kind, which the man has perforce had to quit. This is a duty for which the Frenchwoman is always partially prepared, by her custom of sharing the life of her menkind in a daily comradeship quite unknown in any rank of life in England. The Frenchwoman not only takes part in her husband's recreations—the British workman's beanfeast has no equivalent in France—but she shares his business life, counsels him in his enterprises, is conversant with *les affaires* and more often than not in small households, shops, hôtels and cafés, she keeps the accounts and holds the purse. Also, in all agricultural life, as Millet's pictures have made familiar to English eyes, she shares the daily toil, man and woman sowing and reaping, side by side, in the fields, the vineyards and orchards of their beloved land.

First in the ranks of Frenchwomen answering the call to mobilise were the members of the Croix Rouge, comprising the three great societies—*Secours aux Blessés Militaires*, *L'Union des Femmes de France*, and *L'Association des Dames Françaises*. The war

of 1870 had shown Frenchwomen their heartrending helplessness and ignorance, natural consequence of lack of training and organisation. To realise was to remedy. "Never again," vowed the women of France. The Society of the Croix Rouge was founded, and from an acorn rapidly grew into a vigorous widespreading tree "whose leaves were for the healing of the nation."

Long before the supreme hour struck in 1914 the Society numbered its thousands in every province, and the three main branches were doing splendid efficient work, not only among the wounded and sick of the army at home and wherever French troops were stationed abroad, but also going to the assistance of neutrals at war, and the victims of catastrophes such as the earthquake in Sicily, and epidemic in Italy.

An important work undertaken by the *Secours aux Blessés Militaires* was at the railway stations, bringing food to the trainloads of wounded, dressing their wounds and receiving those unable to continue the journey in the *dortoirs* attached to their station canteens.

With one of the pillars of the Croix Rouge whose wife was a Présidente and his daughter *infirmière* at the front, I spent an interesting time visiting some of the station canteens. He was a strong advocate of the *entente cordiale* as I found all Frenchmen to be who had spent even a few weeks of their youth in London. He brought out his long unused but treasured words of English, as a woman takes out some

ball dress of her youth laid by in lavender. What baffled him was my English replies, so much so that the conversation turned into our speaking each other's languages, by which means we got on famously.

The old familiar Gare du Nord was changed past recognition. Everywhere hung flags of the Allied nations. British troops, Canadians, Australians with their feathered hats, Americans newly arrived, Italians and flying men of all nations, Indians turbaned and dignified, dark-faced Moroccans and Senegalese, and thousands of the *horizon bleu* arriving and departing all night and all day, together with trainloads of wounded, made one feel at the very heart of the great machinery of war.

Huge bales covered about an acre of the station, supplies just come from America for their army, which was pouring in daily to the great satisfaction of everybody. Here the Croix Rouge had a hundred and fifty beds and a free canteen for the French army. The Women's Emergency Corps ran a canteen in the great basement of the station for British and Belgians. It seemed a pity to see these comrades in arms sitting at separate tables and their fare kept rigidly distinct to meet their respective tastes, the British paying one franc twenty-five cents for their repast and the Belgians fifty cents only, to meet their respective purses. My guide and I agreed we should like to see a free canteen for all the Allied troops—no separate tables, no barriers, but a complete *entente* even in the matter of food—the British Tommy

learning what an excellent thing is the Frenchman's *pot au feu* instead of shunning it as though it were concocted in Germany, and the Belgian learning the satisfying joys of plum-dough. The *pot au feu*, however, is a counsel of perfection only to be attained I fear when the Englishwoman has learnt to cook.

At the Gare St Lazare we found a charming lady of the *S.B.M.* in charge of the Croix Rouge equipment. She had spent three strenuous years at her post, often taking British soldiers as well as French *poilus* under her care. Many she had come to know well, for they passed to and fro frequently in the course of the long war, and not only M. Poilu but Mr Atkins too, eagerly looked out for her friendly smile and hearty welcome as something almost as good as "Blighty," this was evident when we visited the canteen.

"The influence of such a woman is incalculable," said my guide, "she is good as bread"—than which on French lips no praise can be higher. She had a large staff of assistants, all of the *S.B.M.*, and all giving their services *bénévoles* to their country.

Recently twenty-eight British wounded had passed through her hands from the Italian battlefields on their way to England via Le Havre. Here the comfortable *Poste de Secours*, with its good beds as well as free canteen, offered kindly hospitality to the wounded Tommies. The *directrice* showed us also a douche bath, a gift of the London Committee of the Croix Rouge, much appreciated and which she said had such an irresistible attraction for "Mr Atkins" he

could never be got out of it but by main force, while it constantly needed repairs after his aquatic sports.

It would be difficult to estimate what these women of the Croix Rouge have done for their country—the enormous burden they have borne, giving not only unpaid service in military hospitals as well as their own Red Cross but equipping hundreds of hospitals, canteens and rest camps all over the country. In Rumania, Salonika, Serbia and Italy, wherever there are French troops, they have opened hospitals also, and these matrons and nurses have stuck to their posts by the wounded while the enemy shells have fallen on their buildings, and the hordes of barbarians have poured into the invaded town. Many have laid down their lives like the brave young nurse Mdlle Gille, killed in the Lunéville hospital, after refusing to leave the wounded who could not be removed.

Many have received the *Croix de Guerre*, *Croix de la Légion d'Honneur* and *Citations a l'Ordre de l'Armée*, but the vast majority have worked equally devotedly without any recognition or reward, quite content that their services have been accepted and acceptable.

The nuns of France have also played their part nobly, and I was told of one community after another who had shown a courage and fortitude equal to any early Christian martyrs; laying down their lives for the wounded whom they took in and refused to desert, opening their doors to the fugitives, though knowing the penalty if discovered would be death.

This courage of the Frenchwoman has been one of

her most conspicuous traits. It has continually taken the German so by surprise he has had nothing with which to meet it. I noticed this when my old lady at Noyon told me of the dressing-down she gave to the Boche Colonel who brought disreputable women to the little green-shuttered house. "He regarded me without replying," she said triumphantly. And Mme Latour when she arraigned the Hun officer for blasphemy came off victorious, for he retired worsted from the field from sheer surprise at a creature he was accustomed to regard more as a neuter[1] than the female of the race, presuming to stand up to him fearless and unashamed, arguing with and even rating him. Madame Macheres seems to have had a similar effect upon the Boche General she confronted when acting as Major of Soissons. "Le Maire, c'est moi," she informed the invader who asked for the Mayor, and though he threatened to have her shot she boldly remonstrated with him at the violence and excesses of his troops—and was *not* shot.

The first thing that struck me on getting in touch with the work of my friends in Paris was the clever way the Government had made use of all the Suffrage Societies. From the very beginning they had mobilised their services, converting the various organisations into centres for starting branches of national service. These societies, with their staffs of trained women, their offices and their Press departments, proved invaluable. At Le Havre and many other centres the Feminist Society became a *Bureau d'Assistance*

[1] Das Weib—noun neuter—the wife. Das Madchen—noun neuter—the girl.

functioning with municipal funds. At Rouen the Commission of Succour and Aid was presided over by the Mayor, assisted by six women of the National Union for Women Suffrage. When the Government wanted a powerful appeal to the moral influence women must exert on the soldier it was the Présidente of the French Union for Women's Suffrage who voiced that appeal and issued a pamphlet which was distributed throughout the length and breadth of France. For it was decided at the beginning of the war to grant, whenever possible, seven days' leave every four months to the men at the Front, and it was realised that much depended on the wives and mothers in what spirit those men returned to their grim duty. If the women kept their faith and courage high, all would be well, as the Suffragist leader told them in her simple and stirring words :

" By the effect of this leave on our soldiers, the manner in which we receive them, and above all the way in which we send them back to their duty, we shall show whether we are women worthy of France, or merely poor loving creatures without courage or noble ideals, unworthy to be wives and mothers of French soldiers. . . . Our responsibility towards them is overwhelming, for the attitude of the women may be a decisive influence. . . . Let us never forget that our inner thought reflects itself upon the face and in the speech, and that ignoble thought, like noble emotion, will find an echo in the hearts of our men. . . ."

The Government were wise indeed to mobilise such a moral force as this. Curious to think that the men who could go so far could not go the logical step further and give these women the political freedom which would enable them to extend incalculably their uplifting influence. Perhaps they considered it unnecessary since they achieved so much without the vote, and no doubt a fear of the influence of the priest in politics made the anti-clerical party vote against it to a man.

Frenchwomen did not rest content with exercising moral influence in their own homes. They rose in their strength to combat not only the Germans in the field, but those internal foes more to be dreaded than the Boche—vice, drink, child-mortality. Recognising the terrible menace of the growing evil of alcohol, a special danger to a nation at war, the women of the *Conseil National des Femmes Françaises*, a federation of one hundred and fifty feminist Associations, together with the great Suffrage Unions, inaugurated a vigorous campaign, holding meetings all over France, getting up petitions and publishing pamphlets giving statistics. They roused the nation, and with the help of military authorities and medical men, brought such pressure to bear on the Government that certain measures were passed controlling liquor traffic and forbidding absinthe. Much more would have been achieved but for the same powerful influence exerted by Vested Interest, which prevented effective reform in England.

Another enterprise created by the women of France for fighting the evils of drink, and in which I found many of my friends in Paris actively engaged, was the *Foyer du Soldat—i.e.* soldier's clubrooms providing healthy foods, temperance drinks, and a cheerful, bright atmosphere where the *poilu* could find newspapers, writing material, music and games, or rest and quiet, according to his taste. These proved such a success that wherever troops were stationed there was an urgent demand for a *foyer*, and the Municipality in many towns inaugurated this same boon for civilians. In connection with these *foyers* the women worked that other scheme of *filleuls* or godsons—the adoption of the homeless *poilu* into a family who receive him when on leave and send him parcels when at the Front.

What Frenchwomen are doing is such a wide subject it is only possible just to touch on the limited aspect offered by what I found my own friends and their friends to be doing.

Several days I spent in the company of that familiar and beloved friend of the poor, Madame Jules Siegfried, for years a leading suffragist and President of *L'Union pour le Suffrage des Femmes*. She is a true "Sémeuse de Courage," and those words of hers, "Si nos cœurs aspirent à la paix, nos consciences nous le défendent aujourd'hui," were the Frenchwomen's answer to all Pacifists. She was the moving spirit of the meetings of *L'Union des Familles* held in a populous part of Paris, where on Saturday evenings crowds of men and

women assembled in the big hall to hear conferences on the war, religion and social subjects, given by distinguished Generals and members of the Government, who recognised the vital importance of holding up constantly the ideals for which the war was waged, and the reasons for the tremendous sacrifices the nation was called upon to make. This constant fuel was needed to keep bright the flame of courage and faith in a nation so sorely tried, where every family was in mourning, and the long black veil the prevailing note in every crowd. One evening I passed at the *Union des Familles* Madame Siegfried herself gave us a charming little address, taking as her subject the *poilu's horizon bleu* uniform and all it symbolised. A leading tenor of the opera sang stirring patriotic songs, and a first-rate choir gave us glees and part songs. The audience was entirely composed of working people, and many brought their children—the regular family party you so often see in France taking their pleasures all together.

On another occasion I went with Madame Siegfried to one of her Maternal Canteens, branches of which exist all over Paris. They are *gratuite*, and open to all—married and unmarried mothers, Catholic, Jew or pagan, no questions asked, the only qualification necessary being a doctor's certificate. Two excellent meals are given every day, and the results of the food, rest and sympathy are such that these women undergo a transformation not only of body, but mind and character.

Certainly they looked a most happy and pleasant company sitting round their well-served *déjeuner*. Several to whom I spoke to had husbands at the Front—one had two brothers who were prisoners in Germany. They sorely needed boots, and by a great effort she had saved money and sent some to "the poor boys." They were stolen at once by the Boches, also from the parcels they stole all they wanted. Working in the salt mines without boots, they would soon lose the feet—from a returned prisoner she had heard of many poor boys who had done so. Other women joined in with their experiences. All had something to say of the sufferings of the prisoners. It is not only the English who have experienced the brutal treatment of the Hun.

Another use the Government made of the Women's Suffrage Societies, and in which Mme Siegfried took an active part, was the finding of lost relatives in the devastated regions. She told me of two little girls separated from their mother when driven out of their burning village. For months no trace of them could be found, the mother, with a baby and another small child, being nearly crazy with grief and suspense. At last they were found to have been rescued by some kind people in the Midi who were trying every means to discover the mother—the Society restored them to each other. The office is flooded with letters of gratitude for this humane work. It was found to be too vast an undertaking for any State department, so was handed over to the National Council of French-

women. They employ 650 persons at the head office in Paris alone to work in connection with the Prefects of the provinces and the Feminist organisations which exist in every department of France. The work was so admirably organised that already in 1915 as many as 400,000 investigations had been taken up and no less than 50,000 proved successful. It was the women of this Society who by appealing to the Pope and the King of Spain to interfere, got the Germans to return 300 of the deported young girls to their homes—only a small percentage, it is true, but they hoped for more before long.

Another of my friends I found working unceasingly for the welfare of the munition girls. A small group of Frenchwomen having heard of the splendid work done by the English women factory superintendents, they laid their scheme before the Minister of Munitions and the Minister of Works. It had been proved in England that attention to health and hygiene, good food and a good moral influence, greatly assisted the output of the munitions. This was a trump card—it was no question of sentiment, of philanthropy, it was good business, or the practical British would never have taken it up ! The directors of the State factories were slower to convince, but after a lead from the big munition factory at Bourges the rest followed quickly, and *Surintendantes d'Usines de Guerre* were a *fait accompli*. These superintendents were trained with classes, lectures and examinations, and generally spent a few weeks working themselves at the muni-

tions with the girls so as to get better in touch with them.

The Frenchwoman's record as munition worker is second to none. M. Bourillon, Inspector of the Ministry of Works, said in his report that they were "far above the average man, their previous training of eye and hand in such industries as lace-making, dressmaking, porcelain work, having given them a dexterity, a fine precision and exactitude, which made them irreproachable makers of shells, and gave to their artillery work the most exact execution." He stated that "out of 80,000 shells verified in a workshop of 850 women only one shell failed to pass the test."

At Aubervilliers, where thousands of women are busy night and day making munitions, I visited another interesting work accomplished by a French lady—a *Cantine Abri* on a big scale for the women workers. Before she started this canteen the women had nowhere to go except the evil *cabarets* where they were forced to buy bad wine and spirits if they took food. This enterprising French lady, up to three years before, had lived entirely in the brightest and gayest world of the *Ville Lumière*; then came the war, and showed her the other side of the shield—and revealed to her another self. The call for service she answered by showing such a talent for running a business concern she might have been trained to do nothing else. Beginning with meals for 350 she soon had to double the number, and even then the demand for admittance so greatly outstripped all capacity for supply that only

those living at a distance could be admitted, and that by ticket.

The effects of this canteen on the women and girls in raising their moral tone and manners, and improving their physical health, resulted in such an increase of their output that the Director of the factory himself offered to contribute so much a head to the upkeep of this beneficent institution, on the principle of "a sprat to catch a salmon."

"Soon it is to be hoped he may start a similar canteen himself, for the women are crying out for it," said Madame. As we walked down between the avenues of long tables where an excellent meal was being served, everyone tried to catch her eye and a smile. One young girl with whom she stopped to speak was a mark of envy. Though there were seven hundred she seemed to know all personally, and asked after their husbands and babies by name. She had also a crèche near by for the babies, run at very small cost. For their dinner they paid one franc twenty-five cents. I should like to have sat down and joined them at their tempting *potage*, *ragoût* and vegetables, *compote* of fruit and long rolls of bread, beer and coffee included. These women were high explosive workers, very satisfactory work, we agreed, for those keen on doing their bit. They were both interested and surprised when I told them English girls were doing the same, and how lately when a sad accident occurred, and several were killed by an explosion, not a woman moved from her post, and others

instantly volunteered to take the place of their dead companions.

"Tiens—ça c'est chic!" said the French girls with a nod of approval. It made one feel what a pity it was we did not know more of each other.

Munition workers have the reputation of being somewhat rough and reckless, but the care they had taken of their canteen was an example to girls of any class. Though in use for more than a year the *toile cirée* which covered the tables was spotless, the chairs in perfect condition, and a broken plate rarer than an explosion at the factory. "They take a pride," said their friend, "in their restaurant that it shall look *chic*. They themselves also they desire to have the appearance *chic*. We are not the same we were a year ago—there is a wonderful transformation. A year ago these poor children of mine were not at all *chic*—that word so popular now had not even a meaning for them."

. . . . . .

I found my friends working for the refugees, both French and Belgians, who have poured into France like a flood—*we* thought the latter all came to England, the French thought they all came to France—and with as good cause. They had also their own millions from the devastated regions—lodging, food, clothes, all had to be found for them.

Then there were the war orphans which made a special appeal to the women of France of all classes. Offers to adopt them poured in from abroad, but all

were refused if it involved taking them out of the country. France needs everyone of her children, and they were all provided for by the different Societies for *Orphelins de la Guerre.*

Other activities of the women in Paris were educating and entertaining the wounded and the *réformés*, those unable to serve again—and the clothing of these latter organised by the Society of *Vêtements du Soldat*, where I spent an afternoon seeing heroes with one leg, one arm, sometimes both gone, trying on coats and boots with the keenest interest, delighted as children when they lighted on something which took their fancy. I helped one who had suffered considerable losses in limbs into a greatcoat which he said "fitted him to a marvel." He could now face the cold winter with his one arm and one leg and a hole in the lung, and "make famous shells to kill more *sales Boches*," said he with a happy smile.

Though I have limited my account to what my own friends were doing, it would need a volume to tell even that. As an example, I will just take two or three typical families.

"Madame" went daily to a war workroom and stitched away for hours. Her three young daughters, one married to a doctor, all served in hospitals, one near the Front, constantly under fire, wore the *Croix de Guerre.* The two sons were both at the Front, one an "ace" in the Flying Corps.

Another lady and her daughter, who volunteered at the outbreak of war for services in a hospital—

clerical and domestic work, being untrained as nurses—have both died at their posts from pneumonia, caught in the bitter cold of the draughty, unwarmed building—the daughter leaving two little children.

Another member of this same family, having lost her husband and two sons in the war, spent her life in doing domestic work of the most arduous kind at a needy hospital.

But one could go on indefinitely with these examples answering that question, often asked in England, "What are French women doing?"—meaning of course the educated women, for everyone knows French-women of the agricultural classes share that work with the men even in peace time, and that French working women were doing precisely the same war work as English women.

Morally and materially the women of France "kept their country going," while their men were at the Front. As to their attitude towards a premature peace, the manifesto sent by the women of France to the Women's Congress at the Hague expresses their position and their ideals, when they refused to take any part in that Congress to which German women were invited.

"We in France nursed the dream of a peace and understanding, if not universal, at least European. We refused to believe those who pointed out to us the growing menace on the other side of the frontier. How we have been awakened to the reality you know, and history will keep the record for ever. Since

events have proved the futility of a one-sided pacifism, we shall only resume our propaganda when the peace to come has given us efficacious guarantees against the domination of one nation. But is this the moment to discuss peace? With sorrowful amazement we read your programme for an Armistice. How can we think of such a thing while our provinces are still subject to the enemy's yoke, and Belgium stands martyred before all eyes? Do you ignore what France demands of this peace? She requires the freedom of the future, and that her enemies forced by defeat shall be made to recognise that their material strength has been crushed by the heroic defence of their victors. . . . To think of peace to-day, before peace can consecrate and establish the principles of right, would be to betray those for whom we are so many of us proudly mourning. It is in order that future generations may reap the fruit of their splendid self-abnegation and death that the women of France will continue the combat as long as needful, united with those who are fighting and dying for their country they will not associate themselves with one gesture of peace."

It was this spirit in the women which made the men unconquerable. That is what Frenchwomen did.

Big Bertha's "Emplacement" near Coucy-le-Château, 1918

PART II

1919

The spring was unfolding into summer and the voice of the mock-turtle of Peace Conference was heard in the land when again I crossed the Channel and found myself in France.

No lifebelts or rafts, no anxious watch for periscopes or mines—but still a steamer crowded with troops, khaki red tabs, Tommies and Indians, besides civils, Red Cross and Croix Rouge, smart women and dowdy women, and a group of Tommy's children going out to see "Daddy in France."

Boulogne is still practically an English town, and American prices are the order of the day. France is going to take a long time to get straight. If in England we feel the dislocation and disorganisation caused by the Great War even in the smallest details of daily life, we who have only had the enemy blackening our skies and polluting our air, it may be imagined what it must be for France who has had him on her soil for over four years, laying waste six million acres of what was originally the most highly cultivated and productive land in Europe, making of it a barren wilderness, a waste of ruin and devastation, with its villages, towns, cities, farms, homesteads and factories

of all descriptions demolished as if by an earthquake, and Maurice Barrès tells us that more than three thousand churches have been sacrificed on the fields of battle. Over one million acres of forest have been utterly destroyed, and miles of orchards cut down. Out of 213 sugar factories 145 are wrecked, and the sugar industry reduced to one-third of what it was before the war. The coal mines will take five to ten years to restore to working conditions. To heal the soil and bring it back to cultivation will in some districts, experts say, take twenty-five years, the land for miles being poisoned with gas and explosives, sown with millions of live shells and grenades, and graves scattered broadcast over the whole desolate scene.

France will take a long time to "set her house" even "in order." As to being restored to former prosperity one cannot measure the time, for no one can foresee the great changes in physical, mental and spiritual life which may shortly usher in a new era for mankind. But the man-power of France is terribly depleted, the official figures state that 58 per cent. of men in the French army between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five have been killed. The women and children, too, have died and suffered terribly throughout the thirteen occupied Departments. The race itself has had a blow, for thousands of children who survive are permanently injured.

Travelling is not yet either easy or pleasant in

France. What with military, diplomatic and civil passports all *visés* at different places, "great baggage" going by one train and "small baggage" by another—trains that don't stop anywhere and trains that do nothing but stop—trains that will condescend to take you in consideration of your Red Cross, but under no condition your luggage, added to the extreme difficulty of securing a porter who will condescend to assist you, one is apt to wonder at times whether any reason could justify leaving one's happy home—where doubtless, however, things are just as bad for the travelling stranger.

Waiting on the Amiens platform a joyful strain broke through the din—a train full of British Tommies just starting set up a chorus of "Back to Blighty." They were packed into covered cattle-trucks, standing in the doorways and seated on the steps, swarming all over like bees outside a hive. The various trucks were inscribed in big chalk characters:

"Remnants from Salonika — Mesopotamia — Palestine," "Balkan Harriers," "Sardine Villa," "Tommie's Rest House," "Sussex and Devon bound for Blighty," "Vive la France," "Au devoir!"

The French cheered them heartily as they steamed out.

There is a feeling in the air that France is longing to "speed the parting guest," both British and American. And no wonder, for it is impossible to get straight while they remain causing abnormal prices and impossible conditions for the French

purchaser. Only the profiteer benefits, and he has made, like his brother in England, quite as much, or more, than is good for him.

"It is the politicians at Versailles," said Madame of the hôtel at Amiens where I stopped the night. "They talk too much those gentlemen there. Better for all if they left those who have won the war, our great Foch and the Generals, to arrange the affair. Since November they have talked, nothing like the men for talking! Once they begin nothing arrests them but the roof falling."

"I think the roof will fall if they don't settle something soon," I replied. "Even in England we become tired." "Tiens!" said Madame, "that surprises me. I imagined that in England one was not much affected by the war."

This I found was quite a general opinion—England having escaped the horrors of invasion.

Amiens was full of khaki and *horizon bleu*. All night they came and went, and the trains whistled and screeched—a perfect pandemonium. I got up and watched the tramping soldiers. A long line of blue-clad *poilus* were passing with big loaves on their backs showing them to be *permissionaires* coming from home. Then a squadron of cavalry came out of the shadows and went with regular, muffled tramp down the street in the moonlight. The Cathedral chimed out the hours as they sped through the brief summer night. Dawn came early, long before the bells sounded four, and with it the sweet persistent

song of a thrush—or was it a blackbird? Before I had settled the question I was asleep in spite of the screaming trains, which caused me to wake at last with the conviction that the bird was a cockatoo.

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I went out early, Amiens Cathedral was still drest in her war uniform of sandbags and planks, protecting the monuments and windows. Only here and there a rose window like a jewel gleamed out among the dim grey arches.

An old man and his wife just leaving St Joseph's Altar—a saint who protects the home—did the honours of their Cathedral and pointed out to me the wonderful escapes it had had—a bomb having made a gaping hole in the roof. Having thus found the range it was indeed wonderful that the Cathedral still stood there in all her beauty with that marvellous façade of Apostles and Saints and Martyrs serenely intact. The old man declared it was His Holiness the Pope who suddenly intervened and arrested the Boche wave of destruction with a "so far and no farther."

But his wife was of the opinion that it was plutôt la Sainte Vierge who had saved the Cathedral.

One thing seems certain, when the Huns after a fortnight's occupation in 1914 moved on towards Paris, they said not "adieu," but "au revoir," to Amiens.

"We shall come again in three weeks at most," they declared with the cocksuredness which characterised all their utterances at that time.

Amiens prepared for the worst—took down her

city clocks—hid her bells—and removed as much as she could of her old stained glass. Everyone stowed away their treasure, and many left the city. In 1918, that darkest hour before the dawn, there was a general exodus. The man of the antique shop on the *Place* told how he put all his antiquities into a cart, and many alas, were so damaged from that journey that the rest of his life would be spent in repairing.

Céline, the chambermaid at the Hôtel, was from Soissons. "Amiens is the fortunate one," she said. "These people they murmur if they have some furniture broken—let them only see what the enemy has made of our poor Soissons!"

Céline had experienced war in all its aspects. She was *fileuse* in a cloth fabric for khaki, and supported an invalid mother. Then came the bombardment.

"It was of a severity—terrific," said Céline. "The English officer he advised all to descend into the cellars, but many who descended never came out! For the Boches they sent on Soissons not only the bombs and shells, but the poison gas, and the gas it descends and it searches you and then it takes you the eyes!"

For months Céline had been in hospital, gassed badly and fearing to lose her sight. At another time she was struck by shrapnel in the shoulder and again had to be operated on in hospital.

"Just as well to have been at once in the trenches, and had the satisfaction to shoot some *sales Boches*," she remarked regretfully. "My brother he also was

gassed and wounded, but he at least killed those animals there, and had his reward!"

All the factories in Soissons had been destroyed, so Céline took a place as chambermaid, for "one must gain one's life, though one's house is burnt, and the poor mother she has to live in the cellar."

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A German-made train with red plush seats, one of the spoils of war, which took the pace of a tank and rather the same gait, conveyed passengers over a circuitous route once a day to Compiègne. One had to be thankful for even this mercy, for many railways were not yet in working order in these parts. We stopped everywhere, even in the middle of a field, and took a look round. When leaving this lovely country of woods and gardens, meadows and orchards, we suddenly came on the trail of the Hun, there was every reason to look round. Stark ruin met the eye on every side. Where he had retreated the Hun had burnt down all human habitations, blown up the village churches, cut down the orchards, and even felled the poplars, just as in the Somme and Oise in 1917. Every living thing had ceased to grow. Charred stumps and sticks showed where pleasant little woods once stood. And all along this dismal route the earth was scarred with trenches, shell holes and trails of rusty wire. One exquisite touch there was, one ray of returning life and hope amid the devastation—wherever a little stream, a little green moisture appeared in the ground there had risen up

clusters of golden iris, the *fleur de lys*—the flower of France. The Huns' poison gas and shells had been powerless to destroy the delicate roots of the triumphant *fleur de lys*. Here and there an old woman in white cap, or a couple of children, were digging at small patches of vegetables, but there was no sign of any house with four walls—their lodging must have been some cellar among the ruins.

At length we came upon the climax of desolation and destruction—Montdidier. Fair Montdidier crowning the heights so proudly for centuries, and now, showing a spectacle of such hopeless ruin as to make the angels weep.

I remembered how at that time of acute anxiety a year ago, one read day by day, "Montdidier has not yet fallen," "Severe bombardment of Montdidier," etc. Now one realised what those short statements really meant. Like a picture hanging on a wall, so Montdidier faces you as the train crawls along the valley—a picture gashed, torn, defaced by a ruthless hand.

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Compiègne was all in bustle and movement preparing for the Feast of Pentecost—in England the Whitsuntide holiday. At the station no conveyance was to be had—all being engaged at high tariffs for holiday-makers—even the porters had knocked off work at six o'clock. Some friendly *poilus* waiting for a midnight train came to my aid and carried my small baggage to the hotel. Compiègne had had a severe bombard-

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PALAIS DE JUSTICE AT MONTDIDIER—DATING BACK TO CHARLEMAGNE

ment, guns and Gothas having united to give the poor little town a hot time. Of the houses twenty-five per cent. were destroyed, but the Boches never succeeded in setting foot here, try as they might. That fortnight they spent in 1914 was the first and last.

Compiègne was crowded to overflowing, everyone keeping high holiday in motors and carriages in the forest. The townspeople had saved up the occasion for long deferred weddings and confirmations. On Sunday the streets were filled with funny little figures in full white dresses down to their toes. We had wedding breakfasts and confirmation feasts; all day one danced and made music in the Hôtel salon,—portly grandparents and small boys and girls in festal array all making merry together and rejoicing over some "*horizon bleu*" on leave.

A carillon of joyous bells at six in the morning woke one with the idea that the Great Four must have proclaimed Peace on earth during the night. This was repeated at frequent intervals till nine o'clock.

"One rings the bells very much now because for so many years one never rang them by reason of the enemy—they would have served as a guide," said Madame the proprietress, who had remained through all the air raids secure in her deep cellars.

The bells brought home to one, as no salvo of guns could ever do, the fact that the war was over. In spite of the ruins, in spite of hospitals still full of the

wounded and dying, in spite of the train loads of soldiers still coming and going all day and all night, the war was over. This land was free at last from the accursed Boche. Rejoice and be glad, Oh Daughters of France!

A *VIA DOLOROSA*

THERE are many such roads in the devastated Departments of France. From Compiègne you have a choice—for round here are some of the Germans' principal lines of defence, and on the road to St Quentin the famous Hindenburg Line. Whichever way the car bumps along over holes and ruts imperfectly repaired, it is the same panorama of desolation which meets the eye.

Very early one morning I started down the road to Maignelay in a rickety Ford car with a member of the Society of Friends—I love the quaint appellation of Quaker, but they do not appear to share my feeling—as driver and guide.

It was a radiant day in early June. How in pre-war times the birds would have sung, and the air have been full of joyous sounds. The busy happy people would have been in their fields and gardens since sunrise, for in France they never needed a daylight saving bill to get them up early. "When le bon Dieu supplies the light, must make use of it," says the thrifty French peasant.

But down the *Via Dolorosa* one hears no birds for there are no trees wherein to nest, no little woods to refresh the eye on the Hindenburg Line. Instead

of poplars and fruit trees there are blackened stumps, tortured twisted branches which seem to have passed through some dread agony and cry to Heaven for vengeance.

Great heaps of shells, live shells, are piled up along the roadside, huge coils of rusty wire and barbed entanglements, slowly and with infinite difficulty being cleared from the surrounding battlefields.

Instead of orchards and cornfields there is a barren waste, scored with craters, shell holes and yawning gulfs, which it will take years to fill up and level. In these fearful upheavals and explosions thousands of the sons of France were blown to bits or buried too deep to unearth. No names can ever mark these graves. They are of that great company, the "missing." Year after year always, for ever, "missing" on this earth.

Instead of happy smiling little villages down this road to Maignelay, you see only a heap of low laid ruins with the name on a board showing this once was Beauprés or Rouny. Here and there was the trace of a village street with a few walls still standing, perhaps a room, a stable, or cellar; in such cases there was always a patch of cultivation, showing a returned owner, having found a shelter, was setting to work restoring a tiny corner to order out of the surrounding chaos. A small hayfield, a strip of potatoes and beans, and a bent figure of an old man or a woman in *bonnet blanc*, told its tale of patience and courage. All workers carry their lives in their hands, for the soil

is thickly sown with shells and hand-grenades. Any tap from the spade or hoe may prove fatal.

The country was much as the Germans had left it seven months before, and as we sped along the road unwound beneath us, like a rapidly moving cinema, showing vivid pictures one after another of the Great War. Tattered remnants of a gigantic wire screen, on which were sown bits of green cloth made to imitate distant trees and moving leaves, lay all along the roadside, and the telephone cords followed us for miles. Here and there lay overturned a monster gun, rusty with last winter's rain, harmless at last like some huge devastating beast with its vital organs pierced. Little railway lines for transporting ammunition still intersected all this region, and great gaping holes along the side of the road showed how deep and strong the Boche had dug himself into French soil. Like some horrible parasite, burrowing beneath the skin and eating away the life of its victim, so the Boche bored deep down his dug-outs to which he descended often by some forty or fifty steps. Comfortably he lined his underground house with wood, making snug beds in the walls and warming it with stoves torn out of the French cottages around. A labyrinth of corridors and tunnels communicated one with another, and a whole regiment could be concealed underground to spring out for surprise attacks. How different from the damp mud holes in which the *poilu* and Tommy lived for months and years!

On the line near St Quentin this system of tunnels was extensively used by Hindenburg, who made use of the long canal tunnel passing under the hill to conceal a whole army of many divisions. At any point along his famous Line he could spring out of the ground 10,000 men and as suddenly cause them to disappear. One can picture the old rascal working out his glorious plan—how carefully he had studied every inch of that ground—it seemed as if everything played into his big German paws. Here was the fine canal uniting the Seine and the Scheldt, which at a given point he could easily dam. All the barges and boats, however, he would first steer into the waters of the tunnel, for, left high and dry when the tunnel was drained, they made a nice lining for his great dug-out. How the Square Heads chuckled as they thought of the wonder-surprise in store for their victims!

The dug-outs of the officers were not only comfortable but luxurious. "The Boche loves much the luxury though he is curiously lacking in refinement," was a characteristic little trait often pointed out to me by the French who had come into unenviably close contact with him. On the hillside at Nampçel was a palatial dug-out constructed for "Little Willy" during his sojourn in these parts, when, besides his military duties, he was doing quite a business in art collecting from the surrounding Châteaux. It was a veritable fortress, faced with stone, built on two floors with a broad stone staircase leading to a flat

Crown Prince's Dug-Out at ruined Nampçel

roof from which a wide survey could be taken unobserved, for it was so cleverly thrust into the hillside and screened by overhanging trees as hardly to be noticed. Many corridors and exits provided means of escape should a scuttle be deemed advisable, "for though on conquest he was bent he had a cautious mind"—(with apologies to Mrs Gilpin!). The place was fitted with electric light, hot water, heating apparatus, and telephones. The walls were papered in the best German taste, but most of this had been torn off. Remains of a scarlet and gold paper pointed to one of the largest rooms as evidently being the Sleep-Chamber of Little Willy himself. What dreams and visions he must there have enjoyed! dreams of ill-gotten gains, when he and his All-Highest-War-Lord-Father should have carried out their fine programme—"Deutschland über alles"—flattening out the whole of France with their steam roller, like this sample of desolation, Nampçel, on which his eyes then feasted. But like the old lady of the fairy tale, "Vinegar Bottle," he and his All-Highest parent asked just a little too much, even of the lenient Mr God of the Germans—and so lost all! And there stands his fine dug-out in the hillside as a *vestige historique*, a warning to the Grab-Allers to the end of time.

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Along the road to Maignelay, as along all these war-worn roads, are dotted little crosses marking isolated graves. Sometimes they bear the tricolour rosette and just the words *Soldat Français* showing the fallen

was one unidentified, but generally these are German graves, respected by the chivalrous French though they belong to the foe who has desecrated so ruthlessly French shrines and tombs. Many of the German graves are marked only by a short stick on which hangs a big grey helmet. Those German helmets are of a cruel weight, twice that of the French or British; with such an apparatus pressing on his brain it must be difficult for any poor creature to think clearly or to act sanely—no doubt the High Command had this in view when designing them.

Most pitiful graves these of the wayside—unidentified! How many of our English lads have lain like this on foreign soil, unidentified, while those at home waited year after year, hoping, despairing, longing to know something, anything, for certain, even if it should be only that the beloved young body lay at rest in a French field with the scarlet poppies standing sentinel above.

Nature had everywhere done what she could to mitigate the melancholy scars and wounds of the poor earth. With her healing touch she had spread a gay little mantle of colour here and there on these arid battlefields; red poppies, white marguerites, and blue cornflowers proclaiming the triumphant French flag, while for the English Allies I noticed little bushes of sweet wild rose.

The people who trudge along these roads are always glad of a lift, their eyes brighten directly they see the Red Cross car, and my kind-hearted driver often picked

up a passenger. Among these were two women toiling out to visit a little village where their homes had been. The Germans had packed off all these villagers in cattle trucks to Belgium when they retreated. They had been sent back in March 1919 only to learn, of course, that nothing remained of their village except ruins.

"But one can sometimes live in the cellar," said the elder woman, "and we are going to see."

"Nous allons beaucoup pleurer," said her companion. ("We shall weep much.")

Two families they knew had returned and found a stable where one could lodge. They were going to stay with them two nights, to see—to weep. The husband of one was a mason: "There was plenty of work for him—Yes indeed! And in time one would rebuild all the *petit pays* as well as the towns. They told me of an old lady they knew. Her *pays* was the Chemin-des-Dames. One recounted to her that there existed nothing any more but shell holes—nothing! She, however, was not to be shaken in her resolve. "She must return—must die in her own *pays*, even though she had to sleep in the shell holes." And this is what all these war victims feel.

Later on we picked up a man of prosperous appearance, a cultivator. He was growing chiefly oats on his land as he could no longer grow beets, the Boches having wrecked all the sugar mills. The Government were anxious all cultivators should return at once, and gave grants to those who did so—nothing to those

who stayed away. They are paid according to the hectare they work.

"But it is not amusing," he said, "to clear the earth of live *obus* and rusty wire—yes, and dead corpses also."

"The Germans should be made to do it all," said the Friend in a thoroughly militant voice.

The cultivator agreed heartily: "One obliges them to assist in the work, many of them from the camp over there, but they murmur much and say that it is too dangerous—often there arrive accidents, sometimes to the Boche, the same as to us."

"The only way to teach the Boche is to do to his country something of what he has done to these," said the man of peace sternly. "A few devastated villages and towns in Germany with an occasional mine and sugar mill stopped working would have had more effect than all Mr Wilson's Notes and Points."

This was said in English, so was lost on the cultivator, but if a member of the Society of Friends can be so stirred out of his fundamental pacificism one can make a good guess at that cultivator's sentiments.

Going through Tricot we passed some thirty Boches, prisoners in charge of one guard. They looked remarkably fit, ruddy and well-fed, but very sulky. No doubt as they carried spades they had been clearing the fields of the live shells their brother Boches had sown for the benefit of French peasants. This kind of poetic justice does not appeal to the

Boche; neither poetic, nor any other kind of justice, is to be found in his War-book.

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One thing we never saw as we drove all over these regions once so rich in pasture land, and that was a cow. Perhaps they, too, were living in the cellars, there was certainly not much of a meal to be got off poppies and ruins. I did hear of one man who had two cows, "but such skeletons, just to see them one crossed oneself to keep off ill-luck."

And I thought of a meeting at the Albert Hall I was ill-advised enough to attend, lured there by the camouflaged announcement, "A Peace of Conciliation." One of the many amazing statements at that meeting was that a monstrously unjust and unchristian clause had been *secretly* inserted in the Peace terms requiring Germany to hand over 140,000 (I think was the figure) of her milch cows to the French, thus robbing the poor innocent German babies of their scanty diet. Cries of "shame" echoed through the hall—not a voice was raised in defence of the true facts, namely, that this was merely a question of restoration, and part restoration only, of stolen goods, and came under the clause for restitution—not much secrecy about that!

Tours are being arranged everywhere for visiting the devastated regions, notices of these are to be seen posted up in all the railway stations, and occasionally a crowded touring-car would race past us in a cloud of dust. The idea is to enable all men to see what is

the nature of that foe lying ever watchful on the other side of the Rhine, "lest they forget," those sons and daughters of France who did not themselves come under the heel of the invader; those who did, and their children after them, are in no danger of "forgetting."

There are many unimaginative people this side of the Channel, together with those criers of "shame" at the Albert Hall, to whom such a tour would be most beneficial. In their case not "lest they forget," for they have never begun to know, but that they may learn and see something of the *Via Dolorosa* other feet have had to tread.

THE KHAKI GIRLS

Among the many wonderful things to be seen in France at this supremely interesting moment of her history, while the beaten Boche cowers at her feet and still her Allies are in her midst, are the regiments of English khaki girls, and nowhere can you see a greater variety than at Compiègne. They are of every uniform and taken from every class—but they are all alike in this—they are a revelation—amazing, amusing, splendid and soul-stirring.

The Great War has been their great opportunity—and they have taken it—just precisely as it has been that of millions of their brothers, who otherwise had drudged or lounged, according to their station, through life, without ever realising their latent manhood. And what a marvellous unfoldment of capacity, courage, strength, resource and even genius, it has been. Five years ago suddenly one brilliant summer's day, with the great boom of guns, Life opened wide its gates hitherto so jealously closed against the whole sex.

Just here and there a daring forceful spirit of unquenchable virility, unable to get in through the gates, had climbed the high walls, and had met with the rough fate of all who climb walls instead of going through orthodox openings—many a bruise, many a blow, and

the isolation that is the sorest penalty of daring to be "not like other people."

But the first British guns of 1914 proclaimed the new era for women. Incredibly swiftly it became clear that not only men but women were needed to win the greatest war, in the greatest cause, the world had ever known.

French women were mobilised by a call from their President the same week as their men. Britain's women came in more slowly, but just as surely. I remember a funny conversation with a motor-bus conductor who said he would be joining up were it not that no one could fill his job. Just back from Paris I suggested an able-bodied woman might fill the gap as in that city. He regarded me with scorn:

"A woman conduct a bus? Why they 'aven't the *nerve*, let alone the strength—I'd pity the bus as was conducted by a woman!"

This gentleman voiced the opinion of his class, and that also of the majority of every other in England. And not only was it a fixed idea on the part of men that women had their narrow limitations fixed by Nature and sanctioned by the immutable law of the Creator, but the same idea obtained to a great extent among women themselves. It is to women, above all, that the great revelation has come of their own powers.

The first amazing fact that stirred the girl of the educated classes, not obliged to earn her living, was that there was something definite for her to do—more

—that she was actually being urgently called upon to do it. To be needed, not just as a pretty or amusing girl for a dance or house-party, but needed to help win the war. Her men-kind were going, life was shaken to its foundations, and they actually wanted women, wanted girls—not only as nurses, which meant vocation and training, but as V.A.D.'s, as canteen workers at home and abroad, as clerks, as bus-drivers, postmen, policemen, ploughmen, printers, bank clerks, secretaries in the War Office, and every other office. They were wanted to make shells, to make guns, to make uniforms, to make food—to make, in fact, the Wheels of War go round. As time went on wider and wider swung the gates, and the British girls in the khaki uniforms trooped through, thousands and hundreds of thousands abreast.

Over to France they sailed as V.A.D.'s, W.E.C.'s, Y.M.C.A.'s, W.A.A.C.'s, as Penguins, Wrens and Fanys —to say nothing of matrons, and nurses who served the innumerable hospitals not only for British troops but French, Serbian, Greek, Roumanian, Egyptian.

Nurses, military and Red Cross, were familiar figures all over France, but the khaki girls were a species so novel to our French neighbours that, having once realised the surprising phenomenon, nothing they did caused any surprise—though wonder undoubtedly and admiration tinged with awe, not without secret thanksgiving that their amazing qualities were not contagious.

Talking with a charming old Comtesse and her

son who had been watching with keen interest the khaki girls, two among them Lieutenants in the French army, passing to and fro at the hotel, I gathered something of their attitude and that of their friends.

"She is altogether different the *jeune fille Anglaise* from our *jeune fille*, said the old lady very gently: "One must not apply to her our French ideas, though we can give to her our admiration for her courage."

Her son remarked gallantly:

"For me I regard the *jeune fille Anglaise* like a kind of Valkyrie—as perfectly equipped by the mere fact of her English maidenhood as though she wore, in effect, chain armour and carried a revolver. My cousin, who is Colonel in the 3rd Army, regards those young girls who have served under him in the firing-line absolutely in this light. They are altogether admirable, heroic, astonishing, he declares!"

The old lady enquired with a puzzled air to what class of society these young girls belonged.

I fear I only succeeded in bewildering her, for I answered they represented a great many classes, and every variety of walk in life. Her son endeavoured to elucidate matters by explaining to his mother that the English modern *noblesse* was largely recruited from successful commercial gentlemen—grocers, soap manufacturers, and brewers—"So, in England everything is, you see, rather mixed," he concluded.

I agreed heartily, everything was extraordinarily "mixed," but for her comfort I assured this Comtesse

of the old régime that these khaki girls were all *trés bien élevées*—even those of the modern peerage—and there were to my certain knowledge, in the khaki ranks, daughters of generals, of admirals. . . . She cheered up at this, and I went on, "Yes, of Ambassadors also, and even of Bishops," but at this last I noticed an involuntary shudder, so hastened to add, "of the Anglican Church, of course. All," I continued, "even the most emancipated, those two lieutenants, for example, who had so intrigued her, were irreproachably brought up."

She raised her lorgnettes on a group near the door of the salon: "Tiens" she said, thoughtfully; "it is curious and interesting what you tell me. It makes me feel I am becoming old, very old—I belong to a world which soon will exist no more."

I told her she belonged to a beautiful world which we could not spare, and there was plenty of room for all. But even as I said it I knew she was right, and that as well might men try to talk in the language of Chaucer in the House of Commons as attempt to keep old world ideas, however picturesque, in the era which gave birth to the khaki girl.

Yet the attitude of somewhat breathless wonder of our French friends, contemplating the feats of the *jeune fille Anglaise* during her years of war service in France, is scarcely to be wondered at. In her trim business-like uniform, with every variety of badge, they have seen her come and go in the war zone as though she were to the manner born. Wherever there

was danger and death, a bombardment or an air raid, she was sure to be on the spot. Sleeping in barns or stables, dug-outs and trenches, fearless and unconcerned, going out alone at night "on her job," serving canteens at the back of the lines when bombs were raining around her, taking on night duty in the field hospitals, one young V.A.D. alone with a hundred wounded *poilus*, driving her great heavy lorry laden with wounded, or filled with stores, from one end of the country to the other.

The French girl of the educated classes has worked gallantly too, but, with a few conspicuous exceptions, always within strict limits. She has made bandages and hospital requisites at the various war workrooms, and nursed devotedly in the Croix Rouge and military hospitals. But the young nurses did not take on night duty, their parents knew where they were, and what they were doing. Those of the khaki girls abroad did *not* know, whatever they fondly imagined. As one of them said when I asked whether her parents knew of her solitary night expeditions to pick up wounded:

"No, the old dears haven't the very dimmest—after all, I'm out here to do my job, and it's no earthly disturbing the old Dad's peace of mind—I just write home, 'very busy, O.K.'"

The English parents knew they could trust their girls and most of them made a virtue of necessity even when anxious. But W.E.C., Women's Emergency Corps; F.W.E.F., French Wounded Emergency Fund; C.B.C.R.F., Comité Britannique Croix Rouge Fran-

çaise; F.A.N.Y., First Aid Nursing Yeomanry; W.C.C., Women's Convoy Corps, and other corps, societies, and units, whose names were legion, represented activities little realised by those at home.

A girl wearing the French cock with the letters F.W.E. told me how an old lady on board, after a puzzled scrutiny of the badge on her sleeve, remarked with a gleam of satisfaction, "You I see by your little cock supply the French wounded with eggs."

Endless varieties of the modern girl passed before one in a series of vivid moving pictures at Compiègne—the headquarters of so many societies and units. The streets were full of their Red Cross lorries and cars, their ambulances and transports. The American women too, with their smart blue uniforms and the gay stars and stripes flying at the head of their swift going cars, were often over from their big settlement at Blérancourt. At the hotel on the outskirts of the forest one met them all, and the little Red Cross acted as a masonic sign between us.

Among the first to come out to France were the F.A.N.Y., First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. They had been started in 1910, not only to render service in wartime but to give quick first aid in cases of mining accidents, fires, and other catastrophes. Trained to ride, and to drive motors besides bandaging and medical first aid, they were ready equipped for service when war was declared in 1914. But it was not their own countrymen who first welcomed their offer of help, on the contrary, the War Office emphatically

gave them to understand they were not wanted. So many able and efficient women received this curt squashing that the Fanys, finding themselves in such good company, were in no wise depressed. They knew that those nearer to the heart of the war would not share this British view. The Belgians first, and then the French, welcomed them only too gladly, and right into the war zone went the gallant young Fanys ready for any perils, any hardships. First Aid Nursing by no means covered their qualifications, though they were trained to give such aid to those they bore on their stretchers and picked up on the field, rescued from burning buildings, or dug out of shell holes and trenches, buried by explosions. But the one chief essential was that every Fany should be an expert driver of car and lorry, able also to repair any damage and attend to any sudden attacks the complicated machinery might be taken with *en route*. No child's play this, but work calling forth a high standard of mechanical skill, dexterity, nerve, and self-reliance. This latter work, it must be remembered, being generally in the dark, at great risk driving along the exposed roads riddled with shell holes, to and fro between the dressing stations and the firing line.

Many and various were the duties of the fearless Fanys. For the Belgians they ran hospitals, one at Calais entirely at their own expense for two years, for wounded and typhoid cases. At Ruchard Camp they had a canteen for seven hundred convalescent Belgians, at Ypres a motor kitchen and a wonderful

motor bath which not only gave two hundred and fifty baths a day, but also disinfected the men's clothes. They worked with the doctors of the 3me Chasseurs à Pied at Oostkerk and with the officers of the 7th Artillery Regiment, establishing aid posts and canteens. Their motor ambulances were attached to the hospitals close up to the firing line at Hoogstadt during 1916 and 1917. Their services for the French army were no less valuable, and their motor ambulances and lorries were unceasingly at work round Amiens, Château-Thierry, Epernay, Chalons, Bar-le-Duc, and St Omer.

When Foch entered Alsace with his triumphal army he was accompanied by a detachment of twenty-five youthful Fanys, each driving her own *camion* (lorry). They were attached to the 3rd Army, and their work among other things was to collect the French wounded prisoners in the various internment camps at Stuttgart and other German towns, and take them back to France. A real Valkyrie's task this and with considerably more difficulties and dangers than carrying one dead hero on your saddle-bows.

A youthful Fany whom I met at Compiègne told of an adventurous journey when, owing to a breakdown of her *camion—camions* are always breaking down it appears at critical moments—she got separated from her party, and found herself late in the winter's afternoon alone in the streets of Stuttgart, surrounded by an ugly hostile German crowd as she tried to find her way to the nearest internment camp. She spoke

no German and very little French. She was about as frankly English with her blue eyes, rosy sunburnt cheeks and nutbrown short-cropped curls, as a Union Jack, though she was attached to the French army and wore the small red grenade on her shoulder.

She faced the hectoring officials, who gathered threateningly round her car, with a lordly air and the information that she "had no time to waste!—was there anyone there sufficiently in touch with civilisation to speak English? If so, let him step out, and the rest step back, if you please."

A tall German officer answered the summons of this, no doubt to him, most extraordinary young specimen of the female persuasion ever before encountered. Its age was obviously of the most tender, its figure tall and slender as a youth of seventeen, its voice—in spite of the imperious tone—unmistakably tinged with that of the childhood still within bowing distance. Something of a paternal and protecting chord was evidently touched in the heart of the German, for Germans there are among the eighty million who have escaped the poison virus with which the vast majority of their nation has been inoculated. He mounted by her side in the *camion* and directed her to drive with him to the Police Station, saying in good English that she was in great danger in the public streets, and it was essential to get her into safety at once. Though she had no option but to trust him she felt not unlike a trapped bird when he conducted

her into the presence of three big, important, lowering Hun officers behind closed doors. These gentlemen looked at her with no lenient, paternal, or fraternal, eye. The chorus of guttural discussion in which they all joined angrily, sounded to her uncommonly like the old Hymn of Hate, and it would not have surprised her to hear the verdict of, " off with her head," at any moment. Who would have been the wiser? A girl got separated from her unit in the dark, lonely roads, missed her way, no trace to be found, etc. She realised the situation poignantly, and her momentary helplessness in the hands of the enemy, the newly beaten enemy, thirsting for vengeance. She did not realise the other side of the picture—the danger to the foe of touching a hair of her head. But she made a good bluff of sang-froid, and requested the gentlemen to put her in touch as quickly as possible with the French army and the C.O.'s of the various internment camps, in order that she might find her unit.

The big bosses blustered and swore at the coolness of the Frauenzimmer (*i.e.* the " crittur "), but, with the assistance of her first friend and the telephone, she found herself in about a couple of hours safely united again to her comrades who had not yet discovered her absence, arriving, as they did, in different parties and by various routes.

The freight the Fanys bore back to France in their cars were in piteous plight. Many of these poor victims of Boche Kultur were mere skeletons, all were emaciated from starvation. Many were dying

of tuberculosis brought on from cold, insufficient clothing, and exposure. One poor boy was kept alive during the drive only by frequent doses of brandy and died before reaching France, his one prayer all the way being to live till he touched French soil. The girl driver had no doctor or nurse with her on that terrible journey—only another sick man to lend a hand.

All through December back and forth went the five and twenty Fany-drivers, wishing, as did the rescued French prisoners, that they could multiply themselves by a hundred. For there was work for any number, and nothing as yet organised for removing the many thousands interned from these awful camps of suffering and slavery into light and freedom, back to their own beloved France, which most of them had feared never to see again.

Another singular task allotted to the Fanys, by the French military authorities, in those early days after the Armistice, was that of removing German prisoners near the frontier, further back into France. As some eight stalwart Boches apiece were entrusted to the English girls they requested they might be accompanied by a French guard, pointing out that the unarmed driver of a heavy *camion* could scarcely undertake to prevent any, or all, her precious charges, alighting *en route* had they a mind to do so.

The French officers in command made answer that there were no men who could be spared for this purpose. A curious reply when it is remembered

how carefully shielded is the young French girl of the same class—even an unarmed man would have asked for a guard. The French C.O.'s evidently regarded the Fanys as supernatural and invincible. Could they otherwise have seen these young girls go off gaily with their cargo of eight big surly Boches prisoners, for whom they were held responsible, alone, unprotected, unarmed, and generally just as darkness was setting in, owing to the invariable delays and postponements with which they had to cope, however much they tried for an early start. To keep together was absolutely impossible owing to mishaps by the way.

One girl I know found herself, on a dark December night in 1918 crossing the Vosges mountains, obliged to draw up and deal with a carburetter which suddenly and resolutely struck work. As the last of her unit flew past her she sang out an S.O.S., but it faded away into the night air, and she was alone with her eight Huns on the mountain side. She heard them laugh—what would they do? Murder her—drive off with the car? Escape? She was only twenty-two, but, as she said to herself, quite old enough to take command of eight big Boches—men who had been taken with whole skins, holding up fat hands and crying "Kamarad!" After carefully examining the machine and finding what had gone wrong she went round to the door of her caged beasts.

"Here, one of you, come and give me a hand with this job," she said in firm tones. There was a general

movement and a brief discussion of which she did not understand a word, it might have meant: "Now is the moment to fall upon this absurd female thing and take over the car." Some of them had faces quite in keeping with such sentiments.

"*One* of you," she said, with her most official manner, holding up one finger for their better comprehension. "All the others—stay put!"

This order had a German sound about it which quite pleased her. One of the eight thereupon jumped out of the *camion* and followed her. Those "staying put" raised a curiously discomforting roar of laughter.

"Never mind—let 'em laugh—Fatheads!" said our heroine, and proceeded to give her mind wholly to the matter in hand. She reports that it took her and the Boche assistant one whole blessed hour before that devil-possessed carburetter would start work again. The Boche came out well—working both diligently and intelligently, as is his custom when under strict orders, and having calculated carefully that more is to be gained along those lines than others. It is as "top dog" that the Boche invariably comes out at his worst, and the leopard shows his spots—a bully and a tyrant, intriguing and deceptive. This is the verdict of all who have had dealings with him.

. . . . . .

Though their services were at first scorned by their own country, a time came when the Fanys were asked by the British army to send a detachment to Calais.

One of this number told me something of their strenuous duties while there. It was the young Fanys who were sent out night after night when the German bombs fell on Calais, to rescue the wounded, to extricate the shrieking burning victims from the wreckage, to carry back the dead, even to collect the human débris and try and identify their remains.

In the snow and darkness and storm out they sallied, generally each one alone, driving her *camion.* On one occasion she who told me had a curious escape, with her precious freight just rescued from a bombed and burning house. As they were starting an old man begged to be allowed to return to the house and fetch his money. The driver hesitated, for shells were exploding all round, but at his entreaty she gave way and went herself to fetch his treasure. These few moments' delay saved them all, for a huge shell burst at the end of the road in her absence, just where the car must have passed had it started.

Sometimes these Fanys were out for thirty-six hours at a time, drenched to the skin, frozen stiff with cold. "It made one realise what those poor boys have to go through in the trenches," she said.

One of the most terrible tasks had been taking dead bodies out of the canal, many of which had been there two or three weeks. As she spoke of this I could not help feeling it was work which might have more suitably been set to some of those young gentlemen permitted to wear khaki, yet who bore the letters N.C.C. on their caps. But the girl felt differently.

"I shouldn't want a man who wouldn't fight for his country, and yet dared to put on the soldier's uniform, to pick up my body, even when it had been three weeks in the water," she remarked.

This Non-Combative Corps must have been equipped with pretty thick skins under their protecting khaki, for I know some of the canteen ladies who viewed them in much the same way as this young Fany. One newly arrived, on being told that a party were approaching, received the spokesman, who demanded hot coffee and refreshments, by enquiring what exactly signified those letters on his cap N.C.C.? Very glumly he replied:

"Non-Combative Corps."

"Do you mean that you refuse to fight for your country?" asked the lady incredulously.

"We have a conscientious objection to doing so," answered another of the party with a superior air.

"Have you!" said the lady of the hot coffee and buns. "Well, I too have a conscience, and it makes me have a conscientious objection to serving men like you. Please leave this canteen—it is not for *you* we women come out here."

And no hectoring or blustering remonstrance could induce her to reverse this decision. In the end, I was told, gentlemen of this persuasion were obliged to have a special canteen run for them by their own Society.

The Fanys were often cited for conspicuous valour by the French army, and many have been awarded the

Croix de Guerre. I think it is safe to say all have deserved it.

. . . . . .

It was at Compiègne I met that gallant little officer Lieutenant H. of the H-L unit. Across her breast was a perfect rainbow of decorations — "Cette Demoiselle a été beaucoup decorée," said Madame la propriétaire. But 2nd Lieutenant H—— reserved all her pride for her unit, not herself personally. And good cause she had, for during two and a half years of hot fighting this gallant band of about twenty-five Englishwomen took part in the front line work of the French army. At first the High Command refused to let them go to the actual front line of battle and used them for divisional work, the responsibility, said the French General, was too great, he did not want English women killed, "the front line was only for the most fit *men*." They had to content themselves therefore with stretcher bearers' work in the war zone. By dint of persevering insistence, however, they got their hearts' desire at last, and in 1916, till the end of the war, they served as a fighting unit, not as a Red Cross, for the French have no Red Cross actually in the front lines. They wore the same cap as the French soldier and his blue steel helmet under fire. They shared the *poilu's* life in the trenches, and the two heads received their 12 francs 50 cents a month as the pay of *sous-lieutenants*. They served under many generals, Humbert, Debeney, Mangin, de Fonclar, and their unit was twice decorated

with the *Croix de Guerre* and received the regimental yellow *fanion* with the cock of France in one corner and the lion of England in the other. They were in Compiègne during its severe bombardment, and with the French army both in the retreat and the victorious advance of 1918. A proud record truly!

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Another familiar little khaki warrior often to be seen passing and repassing at Compiègne was "Tim" of the Emergency Corps. A more cheery and heart-warming sight than her little sunburnt face and bright twinkling brown eyes could not have been met with on the fields of France. And she had gladdened them with that sight since August 1914, when, the day after the declaration of war she booked a passage for Europe, sold her pack of beagles and with an ambulance car set sail, waving a cheery "so long" to the statue of Liberty—the liberty she was going to do her bit to defend, being one of the first Americans to recognise that this was her country's war—every man's war, who cared a jot for Right. Determined not to waste a minute, Tim turned her hand to any job that came along; the first she could find after landing in England being packing hay all day, and recruiting at night, in which latter occupation she was remarkably successful. Under her fusillade the Waverer ceased to waver, the Conchy ceased to conche. "To the front!" cried Tim, and to the front they hastened with all speed, to remove the reproach of Tim's "skunk!" from their scorched ears.

But it was for the front she herself panted, and her strenuous endeavours were at last crowned with success, for nothing can deter Tim when once her mind is made up—no official voice, no red tape, no warnings have power to affect her, except to a greater output of will.

What she did when she got to France it would take a thick volume to tell. For four years she fought a good fight with death and wounds, disease, and horrors of war in every form. Wherever a case was too bad for anyone else to touch, it was Tim who undertook it—a man whom no one could move—Tim was sent for—a poor boy with his face half gone, trying to speak, Tim could understand him. When one cried out for his *maman* in his delirium, it was Tim answered the call, and his head resting on her shoulder the poor boy fell asleep with a smile on his dying lips, while Tim crooned to him a little lullaby of comfort all her own.

In the canteen she sent them on their way with a gay courage and high hope. In the Rest Camp she wrote love letters by the score, and everywhere she radiated joy like the sun at midsummer. Tim tired? Tim ill? No one could believe it. Yet Tim could be and was, both, very grievously. In that day she lay at death's door, for all who knew her the sun was darkened and ceased to give light and warmth to the earth. But happily the eclipse was but temporary —" God's in His heaven," and Tim still on earth.

And now she has bidden a sorrowful good-bye to

her *poilus*, been demobilised and returned to the land of her birth, to which, however, it is doubtful if she ever would have returned had they not "played up at last." She has taken with her an opinion so exalted not only of the French but of the British nation that either she will succeed in inaugurating a quite remarkable Anglo-American *entente cordiale*, or she will become extremely, aggressively unpopular. She places the British race conspicuously in the forefront. Hearing two French ladies lamenting the fact of many illegitimate births in those districts around Rouen where British troops had been stationed, Tim interrupted in her cheery way:

"Is that so? Why, I call that bully! Some chance for the coming generation in France if they have that strain in them!"

French ladies!!!!!!!

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Life will seem a tame thing to some of the khaki girls when they don again their embroidered muslins and suède shoes. Listening to the various adventures and exploits of some of these youthful maidens as we sat over our coffee and cigarettes after dinner I asked one evening:

"What will you do when you are demobilised?"

A blank look fell like a sudden shadow blotting out the sun. Then one by one went round the half involuntary, murmured thought which held them all:

"Can't live at home again!"

"Not much!"

"The old life! Never!"

"Wasn't life at all!"

What will they do? Marry? Many of them no doubt, but not, as in the old days, because they feel they must. These girls will never marry merely for the sake of entering the "holy (save the mark) estate of matrimony." Some of their number had been engaged, but their betrothed are numbered among the two million who will never come back. What will the unmarried khaki girls do with their lives? They have most of them been hitherto too busy to think of anything but the strenuous day's work on hand. But we need have no fear for their future. They have had such a training in self-reliance, self-control and self-denial, efficiency, co-operation, courage, obedience and direction of others, that they can but be the better, nobler women, wherever they shall go. Many will doubtless find their way out to new countries where instead of being "superfluous" they are needed, urgently called for. The objection to exile and separation is fast diminishing in these days of rapid transit, soon to develop into something much completer, with the perfecting of short-winged flights which may soon vie with those of the bird, who makes nothing of his summer night's trip across Europe or the Atlantic.

Others of the khaki girls will throw their energy and courage into rebuilding and reconstructing a better order of things at home, where the doors are

opening wide for them as doctors, lawyers, chemists, land agents, farmers, school inspectors, Members of Parliament, who knows, before long, even Cabinet Ministers! The last thing we wish for them is to see these vitally alive, splendidly healthy, vigorously growing young creatures, lop off their wings and creep back into the old cages. I can hear them as an echo reaches them of this pious prayer:

"No fear!"

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NOYON ONCE MORE

The newspapers had prepared one for a wrecked town. Such reports as "Noyon Cathedral in flames" —"The fighting in the streets of Noyon has been of the most sanguinary description"—"The enemy now occupies what remains of Noyon," and later, "The enemy have been driven out of Noyon"—in these brief sentences was told the tragic story of Noyon, the beautiful little old town, which by the merest accident had escaped destruction in 1917, but against which the Boches had a specially black mark. The summary justice visited on that Hun officer and his six men, caught by the advancing French in the act of lowering a mine which was to blow up the Cathedral, was to be avenged tenfold, an hundredfold, in accordance with Hun principles.

But no newspaper accounts, no oral reports could prepare one for the actual sight of ruined Noyon—the very "abomination of desolation."

It was a broiling day in June, the midsummer sun beat down fiercely on the great heaps of stones and bricks which once were streets and houses, as I tried with difficulty to find my way to the home of my little friend, Mdlle Claire, the Angel of the military hospital. All landmarks, save that of the still towering wreck

of the Cathedral, had disappeared, and one pathway of ruins looked exactly like the other. At last I found the place where, between a spreading chestnut and a tall pine, her mother and uncle, a priest of the Cathedral, had lived in an old house adjoining a convent. The trees still stood their ground, battered and shelled, but living, to point where the house, now a heap of wreckage, had once been.

I asked where the owners had gone, and was directed to a little street near by, where, in a much-shelled house—but for Noyon quite unusually sound—I found my friends, Mme Latour and her brother, the priest, lodging in three small rooms with a few sticks of furniture lent by friends. Claire was away nursing in a distant hospital. She had never ceased her hospital work except for a few months, when all French nurses were turned out by the German army nurses, who became furiously jealous and refused to serve any longer with them. The French ladies were told that either they must work in the fields or give lessons in French to the German officers. Mdlle Claire chose the latter, having some experience and success in teaching, but none in ploughing.

"And she nursed the sick civilians wherever she found them, even at that time," said her mother. "For when her brother left for the war she made a vow to the Blessed Virgin, if she would protect him and bring him back in safety, never she would cease to give her service. She would nurse all who came her way, the wounded enemy even—the 'civils,' old

HOME OF L'ANGE DE NOYON IN RUINS, 1918

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people and young children, all—she has kept her vow and the Blessed Virgin granted her prayer. My son who is aviator, for four years in the most great dangers, has ever borne a charmed life and not even been wounded."

All through the terrible days which fell on her beloved town Mme Latour had remained at her post, as her brother, the white-haired priest, had remained at his. Yes, alas, the Boches had returned, and this time they had finished Noyon! Like a nightmare had been those months of the second occupation. It was in March they swept into the town after a terrific bombardment, before which Noyon had been evacuated. The few who remained endured suffering and privations past description. I asked for news of the poor old couple in the white house. They and their faithful *bonne* had left in the first rush, together with the children and their mother on the *Place*. They had not returned, "for the poor ones, there was nothing left to which they could return."

During the awful months when Noyon was the centre of fighting—the roar of guns never ceasing, the streets filled with wounded and dying, there was plenty for the old priest and his sister to do. She had trained with her daughter before the war "in first aid" and gone through a course of chemistry—life had taught her nursing. Any skill, any knowledge, any willing hands were urgently needed in the stricken town.

"Men lay there among the ruins unable to move,

in the streets dying," said Mme Latour. "No one to care for them—they cried out to any who passed for water, the poor boys—German as well as French. The wounded one he has no nationality—I ran from one to the other. When I found a wounded German I went to the great vaults of the Cathedral which the Boches had turned into their hospital, so safe is one there from the bombardment, no bomb could penetrate. But the Boches they trouble not themselves for their greatly wounded—those who cannot be made well to fight again. The officer he would say with an air indifferent when I told of a poor boy perhaps dying—'If he is *caput* let him alone—we have no time for those there!' They left such wounded to die in the street or pushed them in an empty house. Often I heard one groaning and entered—Ah! but it tore one the heart! When I reported one had died they would set fire to the house—'That is the quickest burial,' they said. Figure to yourself, then, if they treated in such callous fashion their own wounded how they treated our poor boys—of that I cannot even bear to speak. Before they were dead they have buried many together in one hole."

The priest and his sister themselves bore their dead to the cemetery, and with their own hands dug the graves. Where the distance was too great they would seek out some quiet spot and mark it with a cross, till the time should come when all could be laid in consecrated ground—we passed several of these wayside graves. Many bodies they found among

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Noyon, 1918

the ruins impossible to identify, for they had lost the arm or hand on which the French *poilu* wears his little disc. Many were blown to bits.

As we walked round the Cathedral Mme Latour gave vivid pictures of the scenes which had been enacted there.

"A veritable battlefield was this sacred shrine. Three times it was taken—rescued with desperate fighting and retaken. See here, this pillar still is stained with the blood of a poor boy I found here dead, his head supported against the pillar—all his shoulder was blown away. Many fell defending the altar. The sacred vessels I took away. In a barrow I wheeled them while the roof was falling. My brother he called to me 'Cover thy head'—the pieces, all in flames, were falling round us. But we felt no fear, my brother and I, for we knew *le bon Dieu* had given us this work to do, and whatever happened we must accomplish it."

Of course she was not allowed to keep the sacred vessels—a Boche followed and tried to seize them, but she firmly confronted him, and refused to give them up except to the commanding officer. From this one she demanded a receipt after giving him a list of the sacred things. He appears to have been so taken aback by the fearless and calm attitude of the little Frenchwoman, so jealously guarding the sacred things of her Church, that he gave her the required receipt, no doubt thinking it mattered little. But a day came, little dreamt of by the Boche, when with

that piece of paper as witness, the sacred vessels actually were restored, and she showed them in the beautiful side chapel which had marvellously escaped destruction, and where the services are now held. A fine crucifix, however, was never sent back. "It was of a great antiquity and value—and the Boches they said it could not be traced."

Mme Latour's experience of the Boche was "the higher the rank the greater the thief." This would seem borne out by the ample evidence against such exalted personages as the Crown Prince and Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria, who carted off whole trainloads of loot wherever they went. The German officers left their soldiers free hands to pillage as they pleased in Noyon. They themselves lived in luxury in the surrounding châteaux, and never interfered, however monstrous the crime against the inhabitants.

"As to theft and rape," said Mme Latour, "they would laugh and reply, 'What then do you expect—this is war and we are victors.'"

"One day I spoke out the truth to one of those boasters," said Mme Latour. "It was the Boche Colonel, and he spoke French after his fashion. Vaunting he said to me, 'We are now the masters of the world—look at the map—you cannot deny it.'"

"The masters of the world! Where then is *le bon Dieu*?" I reply. "He it is who is the Master of the world, and that you will soon learn, Mr Colonel. Oh yes, very soon, you Germans who boast so blasphemously."

"Ah, your *bon Dieu*," he replies, "He can do nothing against the Mr God of the German people! He it is who fights always on our side—and see, we have conquered you all—French, English, Americans! The whole world against us, and we march over the lot of you."

"How then!" I cry indignant, "you think you have conquered the English? Why they only begin to show their strength—they who had an army to create. And the Americans, they who have not yet arrived, but who make ready in their millions! Wait till they come—men young, fresh, strong, fully equipped. You think you have conquered France because you have invaded our land and burnt our sacred churches, our peaceful villages. But no! We shall drive you out before many months, for you have not conquered one Frenchman though you have killed millions. You have not conquered even me—one poor woman whose house you have burnt. And not one of you dare touch me as I pass along the streets and tend the wounded and dying."

He laughed very loud and he said, "In three days we are in Paris!"

"Never you will enter Paris," I told him.

"And why not, since we are almost there already?" he asked.

I know not why I spoke with such certainty, but I knew it was so, and I knew also that it was not by human strength but by divine aid. "You will never enter Paris," I said, "because it is guarded

by the Sacred Heart on Montmartre—that Sacred Heart obstructs your passage." At this he regarded me with a scowl. He did not laugh, but went away. Some of these Boches they are Catholics one tells me—though very bad ones. It was perhaps so with him."

But, in spite of her faith and valiant spirit, Mme Latour had moments of terrible suspense, of agonising doubt—times when, as she expressed it, she "wept all the tears of her heart"—as she heard they were advancing like a flood daily, hourly gaining ground.

"When I heard they had reached Château-Thierry, all that night I prayed for France. Never my faith in the divine help really failed, but I knew we must hold on to our faith with all our forces."

She made me think of Moses holding up his hands in supplication—so long as she and others like her could maintain this attitude of fervent faith, so long the Boche-Philistines were unable to prevail.

In the enclosure of the Cathedral cloisters were numerous German graves. The French had respected them as they do all the burying-places of the ravaging invader, but to read such names as Speier, Pfeiffer, Schmidt, under the shadow of the beautiful old Cathedral the Hun had reduced to a giant wreck, was an outrage to the Noyonnais, and the sooner these *Kriegers*' remains are removed to their own country the better for the soil wherein to plant peace and goodwill for the future.

A Boche prisoner was working leisurely on a low

roof in the cloister, sorting out tiles, and, as no one was supervising him, doing a lot of smashing, we noticed. As we passed near he flung a lot of debris below with a vicious clatter, sprinkling us with dust. Like every other Boche prisoner I saw in Noyon, he had a cigarette in his mouth. These are given by the French workmen, men who know now something of what their comrades have suffered in Germany, but the *poilu*, like the Tommy, has a good heart and knows no malice.

"This kindly spirit unfortunately does not appear to call forth a similar one in the Boche," said my guide. "He is as yet a very unevolved being. The false teaching one has given him from a child has distorted his mental sight. They feel no shame at their ugly deeds—quite the contrary. Many have said to me, boasting, as they point to our ruined homes:

"Vos maisons caput—*Nos* maisons non caput—*nous* mieux que vous."

This, from the beaten foe, is instructive, and shows how much better Foch knew the German than the lawyer politicians, so afraid of "crushing" him!

"It gives them much satisfaction," said Mme Latour, "to contemplate the destruction they have wrought in our country, and to think of their own where not a stone is out of place—not an industry is injured. For a people so brutal, so primitive, I am convinced that punishment is the only means of teaching. As says my brother, he who is priest, "Punishment, not of a vindictive character, burning and destroying in return their homes, but a punish-

ment of strict justice which shall prevent a repetition of their crimes against humanity."

It struck me that this would have made an excellent fifteenth to the famous fourteen Points. But it would never have enjoyed the same popularity in Germany.

As we threaded our way through the streets of ruins my friend pointed out the homes of her friends —the monuments which once stood where now lay only a charred heap of rubble—the blackened façade of the once beautiful palace of the Archbishop, and the wrecked Palais de Justice, that gem of the 14th century—the pride of the Noyonnais. With such a Cathedral and such a Palais de Justice, though in point of size only a small town, they had felt their Noyon second to none in the beauty and dignity of her ancient monuments.

We sat down to rest on some blocks of stone outside a garden, whose trees offered some rare and welcome shade. The house appeared deserted, but the garden had been partly cleared and vegetables sown in neat rows in the flower-beds. Suddenly there was a loud report, a roar like that of an explosion, and the large house at the back collapsed like a pack of cards. A crowd collected quickly—springing up mysteriously out of nowhere. Fortunately it was found no one was in the place. It had appeared outwardly solid.

"That sort of thing happens every day," said a man in the crowd. "No house in Noyon is secure—it has been too much bombarded."

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THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE AT NOYON

We moved away from our resting-place, which was quickly enveloped in a cloud of dust as thick as a London fog.

Passing the Rue de la Madeleine I turned in at the garden gate to look at what remained of the little white house of my poor old couple. The walls still stood, but the house was an empty shell—the roof gone. The staircase lay prone on the floor, and holes gaped at one grimly. Yet with its sightless windows the little house faced the world still, pathetically erect, refusing to crumble down on to the heap of stones which covered the garden. Poor little home! keeping still an air of dignity and seclusion difficult to define—an almost human quality of courage, like a garment which has taken on the character of its wearer.

A group of robust, well-clothed Boche prisoners sat eating and smoking on a pile of logs in the road outside. I turned to them and said in German:

"I knew that little house when it was a happy, beautiful home—see what you have made of it."

One of them answered with a laugh:

"It was not *I* did it! What others make that does not disturb me!" and he went on munching his bread.

And after all, had he been the one to set the mine he would only have been obeying orders. Had he refused he would have met with the same fate as the house, *caput*—without saving it. Still the sight of those fat, smug, self-satisfied "Blonde Beasts" was peculiarly offensive at that particular moment and in

that particular place, and I was in no mood for weighing nice questions of responsibility as I thought of my poor old little lady chased from her home, and ending her days in exile and poverty after all she had already endured from the brutal Boches.

. . . . . .

As I went with my guide, Mme Latour, from one desolate scene to another, it was like turning pages of her diary of the war.

"In this cellar here was my store of potatoes—without those potatoes to feed my wounded I know not how I should have arranged. It was from the English army I begged them. They were very good, the English, and gave me all they could. To hide my store from the Boches I visited it only in the dark, and I covered well my potatoes with stones."

"This house," she pointed to a wall which remained, "five times I saved when it was burning. With incendiary pastilles the Boches set fire to it, and if one can arrive before the fire has gained, with a pail of water it can be extinguished. This I accomplished. But in the end they succeeded. For when they chased us all and sent us in trucks to the north and to Belgium, then everything was burnt—our house also we found as you see when we came back."

That journey to Belgium and the time which followed was an experience of which she found it difficult to speak. Imagine trainloads of people standing packed so closely together they could only sit down in turns—without food or water—the old,

the sick, the dying, the dead all together. These were the refugee trains sent north by the Germans. At the station where they arrived Mme Latour, the brave, indefatigable little Frenchwoman, improvised a temporary hospital to care for the refugees as they poured in. Every day they arrived in thousands from all parts in pitiable condition. Over 300,000 of these unfortunate people were packed in trains and sent adrift in this way. To dry their clothes, soaked through with rain, to bandage their bleeding feet, to wash and feed them and find a shelter for those unable to continue their journey, these were but some of the services rendered by Mme Latour's temporary hospital.

Wherever she found herself she at once started a hospital, whether in the refugee train, the station, or the street. But Mme Latour wears no *Croix de Guerre*, no Palms, no medals—and she asks none. "On fait ce qu'on peut." She just did what she could. These are the real heroines holding a place enshrined in the hearts of the poor, silent and obscure—ignored and unrewarded by the Powers-that-Be who require a good glare of limelight before they are able to see those they delight to honour. No reflection this on those who stand in the limelight—many of them gallant enough no doubt, but it is a pity that official eyes cannot see also those who stand in the twilight, sometimes the starlight.

"And will you rebuild your beautiful Noyon?" I asked Mme Latour before we parted. Her face

lit up quickly: "Ah, but certainly!" she said. "I perhaps shall not live to see it—but my children, yes. And no longer will Noyon live with the dark menace which in secret has threatened her all my life—for I remember the war of 1870. And we who remembered those days knew for us there was no security, though what was really coming upon us none foresaw—the Government less than any. Noyon will arise out of her ruins—you think it impossible as you see it now—is it not so? But *le bon Dieu* He who worked the miracle of saving Paris, of saving France, He can raise up Noyon out of the dust."

Such courageous faith is surely of the sort which will remove mountains, even those mountains of wreckage and ruin, but it will take a long time, and only with the eye of faith will any of the sufferers in this war see a restored Noyon.

MELCHIOR (A PATRIOT)

A STURDY, kinkly-haired little fellow of some eight years old in a white sailor suit took off his hat and said "Bonjour Madame" with a charming grin as I passed him going out of the Hotel at Compiègne one day. His hat bore the black ribbon of H.M.S. "Temeraire." I stopped and spoke of the "fighting Temeraire"—was he going to be a *marin*?

He thought not, he had other ideas in the head, "not yet well decided!" I remarked it was a nice cool uniform in any case, and he was wise to stick to it this hot weather.

From that time he greeted me as an old friend, and repeated that charming grin and a polite bow directly I appeared in the dining-room. Not content with that, from where he sat with his father and mother, I would perceive a little head nodding like a Mandarin, and there was my friend insisting on recognition between every course.

We cemented the friendship by showing each other picture post cards, and discussing battlefields we had both been visiting. Melchior, it appears, had to be carefully watched lest he picked up a live shell or hand-grenade, with which these regions abound, in his keen anxiety to add to his war museum—a

collection which he is making for his children with instructions that they are to be very careful and leave this historic collection when they die to their children. For " as this is the greatest war that there has ever been in all the world, never must one forget it, or the men who have gloriously died for France." By which it will be seen that Melchior is a good patriot. He has lost many relations in the war, uncles and cousins—many cousins. The one he most regrets is the uncle who was the brother of his Papa. " He was aviator that one—an ' ace,' and of a courage to make fear *les sales Boches !* "

" One day he said, ' We will go over and drop some bombs on the Boches, hein ? ' And with his squadron of five machines he mounted high into the skies. They did some famous work—dropped bombs on to a factory of munitions which exploded finely, and then more bombs they let fall on a big station which they made also jump. But then came the Boche aviators, the sky was all black with them—they had a terrible battle, the Boche never he will fight unless he is two to one, or three to one he prefers—he knows in an equal fight he has no chance, see you ! Five of them altogether they attacked my uncle, and he finished two—down they fell in flames, but the three they ended by piercing him with so many balls, he fell to the earth and was killed immediately—it was better than to be taken a prisoner ! " added Melchior with a sigh.

" Do you desire to be an officer to fight in battles when you are big ? " I asked.

"Ah no—not at all," he answered fervently. "To make my military service it is my duty—I shall make it very surely—but I have no desire to fight (*de me battre*). Imagine to lose the eyes, never more to see, like the poor Jean Barthieu, the son of our chief gardener—or to die a prisoner as did the two sons of the forester—starved to death in the salt mines of Germany! Ah no—the war I detest it."

Melchior has seen and heard enough of the horrors of war to have no romantic illusions on that point. *Les sales Boches* stands for all that he has seen of hideous brutal, destroying, woe begetting in his young life. He "hopes one has finished well with those monsters."

Madame, his mother, came up and joined us in the garden where we sat. She trusted her son was not boring me. It would be difficult to be bored by Melchior—he is so versatile and so perfectly natural and unself-conscious. At our second meeting I knew most of his family history. His mother had told me he was an only child—as yet, she added. Melchior informed me his *Maman* was very careful not to spoil him, "for you see a unique child who is spoilt—that is an annoyance for everybody." He himself knew a boy like that, and everyone found him detestable. "As for Papa, however, he is not so careful not to spoil me for I see him so rarely. For five years now he has served with his regiment," explained Melchior, "and he is *simple soldat* from choice."

"My Papa he likes to be always with the horses,

for that reason he prefers not to be officer. The horses he adores them you see. In the country we had many horses, but when the war came the Government they claimed all—so me I cannot mount a horse as yet," he confessed sadly. "But soon now I shall learn to mount, and I know very well how to drive. This afternoon," he went on recovering his self-respect, "I conducted the carriage all over the forest from two o'clock till seven. The coachman I permitted him not to touch at the reins—alone, I made the turnings, and in safety I conducted my *Maman* and my Papa to the hotel."

This story was confirmed by his mother who gave it as a reason for urging her son to go to bed at 9.30. But he maintained that to conduct horses was in no way fatiguing when you have the wrist strong—as he had.

Melchior is a great *chasseur*. He goes out with his father whenever the latter is *en permission* (on leave). In the country where they live "there are woods and woods and woods, nothing but that—it is very amusing!" Melchior does not yet shoot. His business is to hold the dogs and follow his father. On his next birthday, however, when he is nine, he will have a little *carabine*, and after one year of practice with this, a real *fusil*, and then he will be a true sportsman. "One chases the wild boar in the forest. There are many just now—one has hunted them so little during the war.—Afraid of them? He? Melchior?—Ah, but no! They resemble the

Boches!" When they only see Melchoir coming with his fierce dogs they save themselves. "Why, in the winter holidays even at the sight of the *bonhomme de neige* (snow man) the *sanglier* he ran!"

There is nothing in the world the Papa of Melchior adores like the chase. Directly the day is fine he says "Now for the forest—come, we will make *la chasse.*" They start and then perhaps, after an hour or so, down comes the rain. "One gets wet to the skin—but that makes nothing—one walks seven kilomètres, even ten kilomètres. Papa he says if one begins very young then never one catches cold or becomes feeble." So Melchior begins very young!

Melchior was much interested in hearing about an English boy I know just his own age, called David. How tall was he? How strong? In what class? Had he a gun and a horse? "Recount to me of that English boy David," he asked one day. "Does he make well *le box*?" And when I told of how David loved so well boxing that he had taught the French poodle, and together they played the boxing scene from Shakespeare of Orlando and Charles the prize-fighter—Melchior was delighted. "Ah, but he is an original that one—very much I should like to know that boy David."

He was sorry to hear David had no gun, not even a *carabine.* "No doubt his father will give him one soon," he remarked hopefully. "Then he must come and stay with us, and together we will shoot in the forest." I was sure nothing would please David

better. "He can bring with him also that dog," added Melchior hospitably.

For all the *grandes vacances* (the long holidays) Melchior goes to the château in the country and leaves Paris, and the school—"God be thanked! Ah, then one is happy!" He has a cousin Alphonse aged eleven years—he is old that one. His father's estate is near that of Melchior's father, so they meet every day. Alphonse brings with him quite a troop of comrades sometimes, and then they play the great game of war. Ah, that is a famous game! Melchior he also has three comrades of his age, and all together they organise the battles. The rules of war are severe—oh, but very severe—and those of the Boche army are forced to obey even as those of the French army. Each man is armed to the teeth, with a revolver and a sword. The ammunition for the revolvers is salt, and the rule is that directly one feels the prick of the salt on one's legs, which are bare, as one wears socks, of course, one falls dead, slain as surely as if a ball had passed through the heart. Any attempt at pretending you are not hit, or at rising after you are a "deader" is visited with summary justice, and you are hauled off to the hut, and placed under lock and key for two deadly hours of solitude. It is pretty exciting this game of war. Each side has an equal number and sometimes the Boches they gain, and sometimes the French. No use the Boches trying their cheating dodges however—one is too sharp for them in Melchior's domain.

When I asked how they made themselves look like the Boches, Melchior promptly puffed out his cheeks, turned up the brim of his hat all round, saucer-wise, and explained that he wore big spectacles and a green coat—a "perfect disguise."

There is a cavalry which sometimes plays an important part. It is formed by half the troops turning into horses on whose backs the others mount, the horses prancing on hind legs stamping with a martial tread—a very good effect! For the wounded there are stretcher bearers, for it arrives sometimes one has an accident without being shot, one falls in a shell hole, for example.

The Generals are elected by vote, and on one occasion the great honour of being Foch himself fell to Melchior, while Alphonse he was chosen for the Kaiser with moustaches very ferocious—painted on his face, a thrilling rôle, as that of villain of the piece must always be.

By great good fortune Foch succeeded on this occasion (a prophetic one truly) in capturing the Kaiser. But do not figure to yourself that it was easy, for he was of a great cunning and strength that Kaiser. Foch, like all good generals, had climbed to the top of a high fir-tree from where he was taking observations of the enemy trenches, dug-outs and telephone wires. And it was from this height he presently observed the Kaiser descend from a similar tree half a kilomètre distant, and begin to walk in a crouching attitude through the long grass which almost hid one's head.

Rapidly Foch laid his plans. Calling his staff together they lay in wait, and as the Kaiser approached to reconnoitre, most imprudently having separated himself from his troops, they sprang out and fell upon him. It needed three men exerting their full strength to take him captive, but the feat was accomplished at last. He was taken alive kicking furiously, and locked up in prison. All glory to Foch who had no politicians to interfere and filch his completed victory from him.

I asked whether the Allies ever played any part.

"Well," said Melchior politely, "we have sometimes the General Haig and one or two of his men in khaki—but for the other Allies they have no importance. "When David arrives he will, of course, take the part of the General Haig, and the poodle he can be the guard and defend him from the attacks of the Boches while he sleeps under a tree, also he can be the aide-de-camp who follows him into the battle."

He hoped David would recognise the necessity for a unified command under Foch—the English he knew had made difficulties at first on this point, but all the world saw now it was only so that victory had been achieved. I undertook to answer for David in this respect.

"You see," added Melchior, "David himself may be elected to be Foch if he shows himself capable to be a great commander."

I could only commend such a liberal spirit.

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When in Paris Melchior attends a *lycée* every day. At 8 o'clock the classes begin and go on till 11.30. Then there is a break and one goes home for lunch. At 1 o'clock he is back again and works that active little brain of his till 4. Then again there is a recess till 5.30 when come his extra lessons of music and drawing. A pretty stiff day's work for eight years old.

He was amazed to hear of the comparatively short hours of David's school, and the longer hours given to games. That Melchior thought a most excellent idea. The cricket he adored it, but one never had enough time to play except in the holidays. For the football he had not yet seen that game.

"David he is the fortunate one—very much I should prefer his school to mine," he remarked decidedly.

But when, having gone through every item of David's day, we came to bed at seven o'clock and omitted dinner altogether, Melchior opened big eyes of astonishment and dismay.

"How then—that young David, the unhappy one, he goes to bed at seven o'clock every evening without his dinner—it is not a punishment one makes him, when he has conducted himself badly?" he asked incredulously.

"It is a custom one has in England for all small boys and girls however good and clever they are," I assured him.

"What a curious country is England! For me,

I should not like that custom, it is perhaps just as well that I am not living in that country even to attend that agreeable school of David's. All the same," he added, " some day I hope to travel to England—all the curious countries I desire to see them, and David he must visit me. I will teach him the custom of dining at eight o'clock," he added with a mischievous twinkle.

I said they must both learn each other's language, for at present if they met they would look at each other like a pair of dumb boys, and not exchange an idea—very dull that!

Melchior agreed that would be idiotic for two boys of intelligence, and he would begin English at once. One learnt such languages at his *lycée*—Latin, English and American, which of course is the same thing only a kind of *patois* spoken with the nose."

He seemed so certain on this point I enquired if he had ever heard American spoken?

" But yes, me I know well the officers of the American army," he replied. " The camp of the General Perr-sheen it was not far from the château, and *Maman* to make them pleasure she gave for the use of the American officers the grand salon and the billiard hall. I liked much to watch how they played, and how they danced and made the music. One American he spoke very well French, and he desired to teach *Maman* the American tongue—but she is slow to learn the strange tongues—*Maman*.

" One must learn when one is young. With that

AMERICANS' GRAVES, PIERREFONDS, 1918

American officer I disputed very much about the war. *Maman* she forbade me to say things impolite, but it was more strong than me you see, when he says to me, 'See here, Melchior, without us you could not manage the affair. It is we Americans who have gained the war.' Then I enrage myself—'How then,' I say, 'you deceive yourselves finely you Americans. You count for very little in this great war—your value has been to make fear to the Boches. When they heard a million had arrived, and many millions were making ready to come quickly, then the Boche he threw up his hands as is his custom, and cried *Kamarad*! we desire to fight no more.' But I say to him, 'You Americans, what did you experience of the real war? Four months that is all! and even then you bring not your own guns—it is the French guns you are obliged to use.' *Maman* always she tried to interrupt our disputes, and scolded me—but I spoke only the simple verity. I find it is impossible to remember to be always polite with that American who so deceives himself."

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One day I asked Melchior his ideas about his future career. He said there were several which promenaded in his head. One he considered seriously was to have a smelting factory, for *la fonte* was one of the things most necessary and useful in all the world.

"You see without it one cannot manage at all," he went on to explain. "For railways, for ships, for autos, for everything in life when one thinks of it—

even the stove to cook your dinner—and the gun to shoot game. I do not speak of the munitions of war —let us hope we have finished with that."

I asked if he had ever seen smelting works. Yes, he knew well the *usine de fonte*, for his aunt possessed one, and he had been all over it with the director, a man very intelligent, who had explained all the things most interesting and most marvellous.

The other idea to which he inclined was a career in forestry. And I could see the charms of the green wood ran neck to neck with the marvels of machinery, as he told me of the many woods his father had in the country.

" One cuts the trees every year and one sells them very well, see you. Also," he added with a confidential little grin, " me I like much the hunting and shooting."

" So, I see you want to combine business and pleasure," I commented.

" C'est bien ça," he replied. " And that English boy David, what is he going to choose for a career ? "

I replied that he also had many ideas which promenaded him in the head. Among others he thought of becoming a great writer, a farmer with plenty of horses, an architect and an engineer. There was an idea also of becoming a famous pianist, for he was very fond of music.

" Tell him that best of all is the forestry," said Melchior. " When he comes to visit me I will teach him how it is done."

Before we parted it was arranged I must come and

see him when I came to Paris. "I will describe to you where we live," he said. "You know the Avenue X——?"

Alas I did not, but it was found I knew "Les Invalides" and with that *point d'appui* he proceeded to make me a plan.

"Voyons! Moi je suis Les Invalides" he patted his chest—"puis voilà la Rue François Premier," one sturdy little leg—"et voilà l'Avenue X——" represented by the other. "Here at this corner," pointing to his knee, "you will find our house—you cannot miss it."

With the picture of that charming little map imprinted on my memory I feel sure I cannot.

THE *DAMES ANGLAISES*

THE *Dames Anglaises* are like the green patches of cultivation, the presence of which on the wide arid stretches of the recent battlefields refreshes the eye and spirit, weary and heartsore with the sight of such utter ruin and dumb desolation. Here you feel is returning life and green growth, a small centre radiating light and hope.

These settlements of some fifteen to twenty young women working under their *directrice* are to be found all over the stricken districts of the Somme and Oise, at Arras, St Quentin, and Pierrefonds. Welcomed by the Préfets and Mayors, the *Dames Anglaises* settle down where help is most needed, and take within their radius of sweetness and light some forty to fifty of the devastated towns and villages. Directly the Germans quitted French soil, the refugees began to turn their wandering steps homewards. For though home in the sense of a house existed no longer except as an indistinguishable heap of ruins, though the orchard was cut down and sown with shell holes, though the Church whose familiar spire had been the landmark of the country side to generations past now lay prone over the graves of the churchyard, yet it was still home and on this earth no place was

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At Pierrefonds. A Dame Anglaise giving out Stores, 1919

like it—even as the face of her son marred and mutilated by the cruel hand of war remains always for his mother the dearest on earth.

This inextinguishable love of the French peasants for their own soil is one of the most wonderful and incomprehensible of sentiments to those who have no counterpart for it in their own country, where the soil is not owned by the people. With the French it is the source from which spring the cheerful courage and indomitable industry which create a garden in the midst of ruins, and sow a row of beans round a crater.

The *Dames Anglaises* will most of them tell you they have learnt more from these French peasants than they could ever teach them, and gained more than they can give.

"The more I see of these people the more I love them, and stand hat off before their wonderful courage and faith," said the *directrice* of a settlement in these stricken regions, one who was herself a splendid example of both courage and faith. Having lost all she loved in the war, she gave her service to the cause for which her sons had died. Gave that service so gladly that at the back of all her practical work shone the glowing devotion of a spiritual vision and power.

With the same devotion she seemed to have animated the sisterhood working under her—a gallant band of some fifteen to twenty khaki-clad young women, vigorous and bronzed as their brothers from

the trenches. Some were drivers and transport officers, some nurses and doctors, others undertook the clothing and feeding, restocking of houses, gardens, farms, and assisting the inhabitants to build up their lives anew, not only with material help but with sympathy and comforting counsels, putting new courage into hearts all but crushed by sorrow and suffering past description.

The *Dames Anglaises* do all their own work. The prosaic duties of cook and housemaid are undertaken in the same spirit as the rest. And as each one left the hive after their early breakfast together and set out for her day's duty, she seemed to me like a Knight of the Round Table setting forth on a kind of joyous adventure filled with ardour and enthusiasm in which toil and self-sacrifice were never counted.

Let no one imagine that toil and self-sacrifice are not the daily portion of those who undertake such a work as this. Living in huts or disused houses, often highly unhygienic, putting up with lack of most of the things they have thought essential to civilised life—learning, however, they were not so! With food of the plainest, and often shortage of that when duty takes them on long journeys far afield, braving all weathers, and with scant provision against the cold of winter and heat of summer.

This is the modern equivalent of the convent. Instead of the cumbersome robes and long veil, a neat, short-cut skirt and coat of khaki, a close-fitting

cap to match. Instead of veiled and downcast eyes which never faced a man, clear, far-seeing eyes, fearlessly, laughingly facing any man, friend or foe; instead of white bloodless hands folded in prayer or cramped with fine sewing, strong muscular bronzed hands, steadily guiding the heavy motor lorry or dressing the terrible wounds of war. Yet both are aspects of the selfsame spirit, women banded together under one roof for service—divine service.

And even as to the Lady Abbess of old, the people of all the countryside come with their troubles and grievances to the *directrice* of the *Dames Anglaises*. And like a wise and loving mother, but with eyes very wide open and in no way blinded by love and sympathy, she deals with each individual.

It is not in human nature that all should be always good and perfect children. There are occasionally cases to be dealt with of funny little tricks, deceptions and jealousies. One somewhat troublesome child, living amid the wreckage of Montdidier, wrote to the *directrice* of those parts a long and vehement protest against the injustice of a world in which more was done for others—even those in the same street—even he might add, and herein lay the sting, his own son—than for himself. The *Dames Anglaises* had proved themselves, in respect of totally disregarding merit and ignoring just claims, no better than the *Dames Françaises*—yet enclosed was his *carnet* showing beyond all doubt that his was a case, if ever there was one, for a cooking stove! A widower for the last

eighteen years, and the father of twelve children! What more could he have done? The wages he gained as a postman were less by far than those of his son who had no children—yet to this one had been given a stove, besides many other gifts withheld from himself.

The letter ended with a somewhat pathetic bitterness: "I make no doubt you will now throw this letter of mine into the fire and say nothing of it to anyone."

The thought that a composition on which evidently much time and thought, as well as intensity of feeling, had been expended, should end without even being widely published and discussed, was the bitterest thought of all to the writer.

On looking up his name and address it was found that Mr Postman had, however, very little grounds for complaint.

Quite a long list of goods, including pots and pans, blankets, sheets, boots and shirts, had been bestowed on him, though it was true the much-coveted cooking stove was not among them. Only a very limited number being obtainable, these are given first to families, and *Monsieur le facteur*, in spite of his twelve offspring, was living alone and had only himself to support, his youngest fledgling having long ago spread wide its wings and left the parental nest.

Armed with these facts I accompanied the *directrice* on her rounds to Montdidier when she included a call to interview personally this case of complaint.

Unfortunately "the case" was out on postman's duty. He had, however, left the key and full particulars of his grievances with his next-door neighbour, and the *Dames Anglaises*, if any called, were to be shown in and see for themselves the bareness of his habitation.

The neighbour, a woman of pleasant, humorous countenance, whom not even Montdidier surroundings could depress, showed us into the two small rooms still holding together on the ground floor, in spite of the collapse of the roof and upper floors. Yellow paper filled in the window panes—all glass being shattered in Montdidier, and none as yet obtainable anywhere.

The place contained a good bed well fitted up. Two chairs, a strong table, and kitchen utensils from the *Dames Anglaises*. It was obvious that a stove would be a valuable addition to the poor little *ménage* of the old man—he was sixty-eight, and the *directrice* left a message, at once gently reproving and yet consoling, for her difficult child, the more difficult that she found he had the reputation for drowning his troubles in drink too strong for his head and legs to support with steadiness. The neighbour, on the other hand, was discovered to be one of those deserving of every help, who had been so fearful of pushing herself forward she had not even gone through the necessary form of giving her name and address at the Mairie.

Few of the people returning to Montdidier find more than a room or a wall to mark the spot where their homes stood, and these are the fortunate ones

whose houses had cellars and deep, solid foundations on the rock. But even where there exists nothing save a heap of ruins, they set to work where it is possible and clear a patch in order once more to be on their own "foot of earth."

When I said to one woman we visited, what courage and love they all showed to come back to poor Montdidier, she answered: "Yes, one comes back though the boy is gone—but one thinks one hears him whistling down the road."

"The road" was a pathway among ruins. But still it is the road—the same spot where now a family of five are crowded into one poor room roofed in with tarpaulin, was where stood the home "the boy" had loved. And still the echoes of his happy childhood, his laugh, his cheery whistle, can be heard there by the mother's heart.

Wherever we went it was the same:

"*Quand même*—it is good to be back in one's own *pays*."

Another family we visited were in a neat little wooden cabin standing in a well cultivated *potager* (vegetable garden) among the surrounding ruins. The hut of which the family was justly proud had been constructed by the old man and his son, fortunately demobilised at the right moment for lending a hand. They had had a dangerous and difficult task, for a German gun had taken up its position on the site of their ruined house, and some fifty live shells had been sown in the ground now showing such neat rows of

beans and peas, carrots and onions. While digging the foundations the son had escaped by two inches being blown to fragments as his spade suddenly revealed a shell three feet long. These seeds of the Boche had to be removed with great caution, for the slightest unwary tap spells disaster, and tragic accidents occur every day. Inside, the little hut contained a big bed and a stove sent by a brother-in-law living out of the danger zone. The *Dames Anglaises* had come like angels of succour and brought blankets, sheets, pots and pans, clothes and food—for all, all was lacking. The cabin was built near ruins of the old home on their own land. It had been a nice solid house with a good *basse cour* and plenty of fine fowls —no finer in Montdidier! The mother was in deep mourning for a little daughter of thirteen who had died in exile from an epidemic of typhoid which attacked the refugees owing to the terrible conditions when herded all together in their flight.

"Yes," said the mother, "the Boches killed her as surely as with a gun—our little Marie."

There are many thousands who like poor little Marie will never come back—the old, the young, the sick, just lay down and died on the road, unable after days of weary trudging to go another step. They were sent fleeing from their homes, and took to the roads, dragging the children with them, carrying the pitiful bundle or wheeling a barrow piled with the few things seized in their flight. Like stray leaves blown before a gale, they fled without a goal, without a friend

in that vast outside world into which they found themselves suddenly precipitated. Some had to this the added anguish of getting separated, the Huns falling upon the village at night and driving the inhabitants hither and thither, in many cases deliberately separating the older girls from their mother.

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Life in the khaki convents begins early—allowing for the daylight saving hour, just about the same time as the ancient Orders. At Pierrefonds as the clock strikes seven one of the sisterhood goes round with a rousing rap on every door. You spring out of bed, and perform your morning rites of washing in fresh, cold water. The breakfast bell rings at a quarter to eight. There is tea or porridge with condensed milk—for the Germans took away all the cows long ago—a dish of wild strawberries, (one of the very few things the Germans could not take away, though they devoured them like locusts while they were there, employing the babies in picking)—a small ration of butter to each plate, and the same of sugar—and plenty of bread, good bread made of wheat from which the germ has *not* been extracted, as in England. So we do very well on our plain breakfast, for real bread is a real staff of life, and each one goes fortified on her several ways—the cook back to her kitchen, the housemaid to her linen cupboard or her broom. Every member of the Community makes her own bed and keeps her own room in order, but still there is plenty for the broom to do. Two go off to fetch

Baby Clinic en Fête, Pierrefonds, 1919

fresh stores from the depot at Compiègne driving one of the big *camions*, and two more with another lorry to take round food, clothes, stores of all kinds, including pots and pans, seeds and garden implements, to the distant villages.

Two others are visiting nurses, and armed with bandages and medicines have a busy day before them, for there are many sick and bedridden *poilus* from the hospitals not half cured, bad cases of tuberculosis contracted in exile, little children, nerves broken and bodies wrecked with fits, the result of fear and scenes of horror from which the child mind cannot get free, and women starting new babies on life's journey.

Three days in the week a long procession of all those within walking distance, troop up the hill, and the big stores are opened out of which come all the heart of woman can desire. Sheets, blankets, pillows, for, after wandering on the face of the earth for two or three years, the first thing you want is a good bed under your own roof. Next, having slept, you want to eat, and for that what so needful, after a stove of course, as a fine saucepan and a big pot for your indispensable *potage*. Without the *pot au feu* no French *ménage* can walk. Then clothes—oh, the splendid stores of clothes for those of all ages and sizes! One woman came up with a boy of twelve and a baby of a year to be measured for outfits. In between these two ends of the family were five others of both sexes, but as they were even as steps she

judged the measure of the absent ones could be rightly guessed. No refugees have any clothes but the scanty ones in which they stand. One family just arrived from Brittany found their house a mere shell, walls and roof intact, but the inside bare as an empty nut shell—even the doors had been taken for firewood. The *Dames Anglaises* supplied all their needs. The Government allowed something, but quite inadequate. The gifts were taken in a most matter of fact way. I heard no thanks, just a nod and a smile now and then.

"Will that fit you?" or, "Is this what you need?" asks the *Dame Anglaise* in her most sympathetic tone.

"Yes—that will do well, I think. Bonjour."

"Come again—bring the little one, I have a frock we will try on," responds the *Dame Anglaise.*

A cloak was produced for one young woman with a whole history of suffering writ plain on her pale, still pretty, face.

"Try it on—let us see how it goes for you," said the dispenser of the stores.

"Oh, I can see it goes well enough, thank you," said the woman, not ungraciously, only with a sort of hopeless indifference. But the young khaki knight was nothing daunted.

"See," she said putting it over the poor thin shoulders, "cloaks are the latest fashion, you know. Why, now you look quite *chic,*" and she turned her round admiringly. "N'est-ce pas, Jacques?" she

appealed to a small boy who had come to help carry the things.

"Mais oui!" said Jacques looking at his mother with round eyes. Then came a smile, a wintry smile —but there it was, showing the sun was not extinct. The cloak remained on the thin shoulders. The thought of looking *chic*, of being in the fashion, had gone straight home and proved strangely heart-warming.

The look on her face was thanks enough as she went off well laden with a nod and friendly "bonjour Mademoiselle."

The point of view is this, it appears: without any action on their part, a horrible, aggressive war, devastated their lives—they lose everything. In the course of time, equally without action on their part, a benign influence swoops down and envelops them, they are glad, oh yes, since one has to continue this curious existence, and *le bon Dieu* seems at last to be attending to His world. They will even go to Church if one still remains, and thank the Blessed Virgin, for it is probably Her doing that these strangers have brought such useful things along. They are a proud people, however, and do not really like taking presents—they would prefer buying, specially if there could be introduced the element of bargaining—the feeling of getting a good bargain produces the keenest joy. Many other Societies working in these districts have acted on this discovery, and now sell all their gifts at a moderate sum, leaving

the money so received in the hands of the village Mayor for the most destitute cases, but the rule of the *Dames Anglaises* is to take no payment, and they would rather have that nod and smile than any thanks. One enterprise of theirs has, however, called forth most hearty and spontaneous thanks, and that is the Baby Clinique.

Every Saturday morning as to some sacred shrine a long procession winds up to the Château Ste Anne, wheeled in perambulators or carried in their mothers' arms comes a goodly company of fat and rosy-cheeked three year olders and under.

"Six months ago," said one mother of two sturdy youngsters, "these were mere skeletons—white and thin like sticks of celery! You see them now—they could take a prize these two of mine."

The two high priestesses who receive the pilgrims are as popular as any saints, and believed in quite as fervently and with good cause. It was hard to credit the "celery sticks" as one looked at this jolly crowd, crowing, waddling up, one by one to be weighed and tested and commended. Condensed milk and medical care I was assured had worked the miracle. These are the children young enough to save, even born under most harrowing conditions they recover taken young enough. The war stopped just in time for help to be effective in building up their fast dwindling little bodies. It is the children a few years older whom the Huns have permanently injured,

the little creatures fully conscious from the first of the terror, the horror of that first cry—"They come! The Boches are upon us!" And the awful scenes that followed: the bloodshed, the fire, the roar of the guns, the breathless escapes, hiding in cellars, the homeless wanderings, starvation and cold, suffering and death on every side. Many of those children who failed to escape were forced to labour like grown people for their brutal captors. If the task proved beyond the child's strength it was cruelly beaten and imprisoned. "They died in piteous numbers," said an old *curé* who survived the four years with difficulty himself. "Yet," he added, "those are the more fortunate ones, for never can these children who lived through it be otherwise than feeble in mind and body." This is confirmed by the school reports of this year, which say that these children who endured the Boche rule in the occupied territories are unable to retain what they learn or to concentrate their attention—the whole system is anæmic and the mental growth arrested.

They are like those poor blighted trees in the war zone, whom poisoned gas has choked so that the living sap is vitiated. The leaves try in vain to push forth and the branches grow all twisted and distorted. There appears to be no doubt from the testimony of the Germans themselves that this was one of the methods of *Schrecklichkeit* deliberately aimed at, a part of the plan of world domination which, by destroying the French race at its source, should

elevate the Teuton and make "Deutschland über Alles!"

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The ladies of Ste Anne included in their household a tiny three months' old baby and a young but enormous refugee dog. The baby's mother had just died of consumption—there was no one to take it, and no one to take the dog, so both found a haven of refuge with the *Dames Anglaises*.

Ste Anne's is a big château on the side of the hill, used as a military hospital till taken over by the Englishwomen in the month of December after the Armistice. Those who have followed in the wake of *messieurs les militaires*, whatever their nationality, can imagine the condition of that château. The wintry blasts swept through freely—hardly a pane of glass was unbroken—yellow paper here and there attempted to stop the gap. Coal was scarce as gold. Electric light did not work. Water had to be carried up the hill, as also the scanty fuel, whether wood or coal. According to a frequent custom in France a large and most aggressive cesspool adjoined the kitchen. The dirt of the whole place defied description. The two heads of the Community, having served as matron and sister in a big Paris hospital, faced the task which would have daunted less valiant spirits. By the time their hospitable doors opened to me Ste Anne's was a very pleasant summer residence, thanks to the wonderful resource and energy of the gallant band of *Dames Anglaises*, who in their task had had

no one to assist them but two German prisoners. These latter had proved excellent workers—men of peace rather than war by profession, skilled craftsmen of a well-educated class. To be with these ladies doing their gentle behests, rather than with their comrades of the camp under the rule of their own sergeants, was to them a cause of much thankfulness, and by every means in their power they tried to make their presence acceptable, doing all sorts of little works of supererogation, offering little gifts of neatly-carpentered boxes and carved frames. To such men, and there must be a numerous class in Germany, one realised that the Great War will bring the dawn of a real Freedom, the victory of the Allies is their great chance to be rid of a tyranny, an Iron Heel under which their lives were ground down. Had their masters been victorious, their yoke would have but grown heavier, the Mailed Fist and Iron Heel held them down more securely.

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About fourteen kilomètres from Pierrefonds a greatly needed hospital had lately been opened, and once a week the *Dames Anglaises* collected their patients and drove them over to consult the American women-doctors and nurses—a very efficient and up-to-date company.

In a big lorry with our girl driver we set out early one lovely morning taking the cases for consultation. We started with an old man with a bad arm, a woman and a child, the latter suffering from what the mother described as " vegetation of the throat," and a boy

going to see his father who had been operated on. On the road at intervals we picked up other patients looking out for our Red Cross lorry, till it was well loaded. A French doctor was of the party, bringing a poor old *gran'mère* in whom he was interested—a grave case about which he felt rather doubtful whether these women doctors would be able to cope.

The idea of a woman surgeon was as new to him as was our little girl driver, who managed the steep hills, sharp turnings and bad roads with such easy skill. In France women have become doctors only in small numbers though with signal success—but they have not yet been allowed to attend the classes and become surgeons. Our French doctor doubted the wisdom of such a step, as men always doubt the step, however inevitable, not yet taken. He himself had just been demobilised.

"This drive is for me a rather curious experience," said he, as we got about five miles out of Pierrefonds. "These are the battlefields. Not many months ago my regiment was here. There we fought those great battles when we drove the Boches at last from their strongholds." He pointed out his own little *poste de secours* just off the roadside, which he recognised, for the small weathercock he had fixed up outside was still turning busily in the wind. Just here had been the French trenches and here the German. From the heights of this ridge was to be seen in the distance the famous "Chemin des Dames." We passed the ruins, not even a wall remaining of a

big farm round which the fight had raged, la ferme de Queunevers.

"The owner," said the doctor, "was of our regiment, and he went over one day to see if anything remained —but there was nothing—nothing—he had lost all, the unhappy one."

Arrived at Blérancourt we unloaded our poor sick "civils" at the American women's fine new tent hospital, and handed them over to the spotless white uniformed nurses of the Stars and Stripes. The French doctor, walking casually into the operating theatre in his workaday coat, was summarily taken by the shoulders and turned right about face by the tall high priestess in white mask and white garments from head to foot. He gasped with surprise, but was clearly impressed profoundly before we left by these women surgeons who so well knew their job and had all equipped with such precision and perfection. Windows and doors were wide open, but carefully netted over to keep out the flies. Everything—floors, walls, beds, utensils were of a spotlessness which, to the man accustomed to the horrors of countless wounded and dying, to be treated in tents, in cellars, on platforms, anywhere, must have appeared almost incredible; even when compared with the military hospital at its best.

Most of the patients we brought were left at the hospital for treatment. The doctor's old lady was told to come back next Friday for her operation. She looked troubled.

"Ah, my ladies, not Friday, I beg you," she said. "It was Friday that *les sales Boches* they drove me into exile. Friday for me is a black day!"

So they promptly fixed another, these American women, who being psychologists recognised the importance of getting the patient's mind to co-operate with the surgeon's hands.

In less than three weeks they have performed sixty operations.

"Many very interesting cases," said the *médecin en chef*. "This hospital is a regular Pandora's box—you never know what is coming out of it."

Many are cases which have been waiting years for such an opportunity as this hospital offers.

One old fellow we brought over declared that his damaged arm dated from the Franco-Prussian war.

"Ah but yes, Madame, me also," he said with evident satisfaction, "I am a wounded soldier! It was in 1870 I caught this—night and day it prevents me to sleep."

He had been a sniper, and had killed many *sales Boches*. They had taken him prisoner, but he "had known how to escape." Poor old fellow, he had suffered many miseries, together with all those of these invaded regions.

"Without *les Dames Anglaises* we should all be dead ones," he said. After examining his arm the American women decided to take him in for a week, and his eyes lit up with pleasure at the idea of enter-

ing one of the white cool tents with their rows of spotless beds.

Under one big tent a number of refugees were taking temporary shelter, having been turned out of their houses by the recent explosion of a huge ammunition dump. It was believed to be the work of the Boche prisoners, for the time chosen was just when the sentinel unfortunately happened to have stepped across the way to the beguiling *cabaret*—"It was but for a few moments, you understand, but those devils they were on the watch, and to put a fuse it is not a long affair!"

The Boche prisoners were not popular in that part, having shown themselves lately very restive and arrogant, maltreating little children if they got the chance, and insulting the women they passed on the road.

"One feeds them too well," said a victim of the explosion, "see how fat and strong they are, and then look at we others who have starved for four years!"

Many brought to the hospital were accidents from the live shells which are not only collected in dumps all over the country, but buried deep in the ground wherever the departing enemy got the chance of sowing such souvenirs. Characteristic mementoes "lest they forget," said the Boches already planning some future return. Ah, there is no fear that the people of France will forget this time. They know the foe of their race at last, and recognise him for

just what he is. Never again will they "forget" and cry an easy-going "Peace, Peace," while the other side of the Rhine the Boche is breathing "War, War."

Accidents often occur while working the land. We heard of a man ploughing his field with a horse in which he had invested all he possessed, suddenly the plough struck a buried shell and the horse and plough were blown to the four winds, the man only escaped as by a miracle. Little children in these districts are brought in with hands blown off and faces damaged for life by the innocent-looking cedar pencils the Boches specially prepared in Germany, forgetting none. These were dropped by airmen in village streets, gardens, fields, and eagerly picked up by little hands, thinking a treasure had been found. The moment the point was pressed to paper the deadly thing spoke. It was not only children who were repeatedly caught by this mean trick—but their parents too, even as the poor fellows in the trenches were trapped to the last by the cunningly fabricated cigarette, which could be smoked halfway down before it exploded and took away half the face of the smoker.

Blérancourt has been badly knocked about since I was here in 1917. The inhabitants have got accustomed to bombardments and *déménagements*, to say nothing worse, but the capable American women have them under their wing and no one within their radius goes uncared for now. The hut where the people had come for temporary shelter was rather

like a gipsy encampment—a strange assortment of old people and children. One of the women, seeing my little Red Cross, asked me if I was English—"Ah if Madame is English come then and say a 'Bonjour' to my old mother, I beg you, for she also is English," she assured me.

I found in a big camp bedstead, propped up with pillows, a very ancient dame most typically French however—quite guiltless of a word of English. Her father it appeared had borne an English name, it began with "Gray," but how it ended, the father, long since gathered to his fathers, alone knows—a complicated and quite incomprehensible series of sounds followed the Gray, impossible to reproduce with tongue or pen. The old lady, past her 94th year, held my hand with extraordinary vigour, and when on getting it free, I pressed into her palm a small coin as a souvenir of our meeting, she assured her daughter repeatedly that I was her father who had come back to comfort and sustain her! Evidently my gift recalled the tips of her father, who, being a fisherman, no doubt after a successful voyage, treated his family all round. We parted with difficulty, my hand had again been seized as that of the long departed English parent, but time was up, the *camion* was ready with another load of patients returning, after treatment, to their homes. Among these a big peasant woman showed a bandaged head from a bombarded roof, and several little children reported a most enjoyable time at the beautiful hospital, pleasure having so predominated over pain

that their stay is stored in future alongside of memories of Christmas Fêtes and Midsummer Fairs.

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This addition to the store of Happy Memories is what I felt the *Dames Anglaises* had given me when I bade a reluctant farewell the following morning to the Château Ste Anne.

PARIS AND THE *ENTENTE CORDIALE*

Once more she was the *Ville Lumière*, though not yet emerged into the full light which is hers by right. Gone were the darkened streets, the closely shuttered windows, the anxious watch-out on moonlight nights and the sudden descent from a warm bed to a cold cellar; but in spite of a wonderful sense of relief from strain, of deep quiet thankfulness, conditions retained still much of the aftermath of war. Everyone was weary to death of the long-drawn Conference —the Armistice not yet resolved into a signed Peace in spite of nearly eight months' talking. Many were bitterly disappointed at the results of the talking as far as France was concerned, nerves getting ragged at the edge, the cordiality between all *entente* nations not quite as spontaneously warm as during the war. Questions which would then never have been considered for a moment one heard discussed and disputed with no little heat—the papers reflected this spirit in their comments on the scuttling of the German Fleet in Scapa Flow—"*légèreté*" was the accusation from certain quarters. We were all extremely sensitive, and walking on a path narrow as a razor, and nearly as sharp. It was only war weariness, the fractiousness of tired children, but one could not

help realising that the time had come to take to heart the advice of Solomon: "Withdraw thy foot (betimes) from thy neighbour's house, lest he weary of thee."

No one could doubt there would be a real rejoicing, a most cordial and hearty "Adieu" the day that British and American cleared out of France and gave the French a chance to settle down again to normal conditions—impossible while profiteering was made so easy by the strangers within their gates.

The first example of abnormal conditions confronted me on arriving at the Gare du Nord and trying to get a taxi. There was a marked absence of the former ready civility for "nos bons Alliés."

"Where are you going?" was demanded by each driver I approached, and my "*course*" refused promptly on hearing the distance. As I could not put up in the Boulevard Magenta outside, to oblige these gentlemen, my prospects looked somewhat depressing till the porter found an enterprising fellow ready to undertake the twenty minutes drive for the sum of fifteen francs:

"There exists no tarif after seven o'clock," he kindly explained to me.

This was a piece of pure romance inspired by original sin. But I accepted it, having no choice. I had already looked round vaguely in the direction of a horse *fiacre*. The taximan intercepted my wandering gaze:

"That carriage there," said he, "demands the

same payment precisely as we others, but he will require perhaps two hours to make the journey—his horse limps—the poor beast ! "

He had me there ! In fact he had me so completely in the hollow of his rapacious hand, I could only be thankful at his moderation in drawing the line at fifteen instead of fifty francs.

This same spirit was manifested everywhere. (I have heard it is not unknown in London !) The fact of being English had been a passport to a welcoming smile and readiness to serve you in 1917. Alas ! in 1919 it no longer strewed your path with these fragrant flowers. " Nos bons Alliés " have become foreigners —strangers. This does not perhaps apply to the *Dames Anglaises* or the American women quietly aiding to build up the lives of those in the devastated regions. There, working with utmost tact, always in co-operation with French local authorities, they are at present gladly suffered to remain, but many in a position to judge, believe that the sooner even these " withdraw their feet " and hand over their organisations to French workers with a polite " Bonsoir la compagnie," the better it will be for the growth of that delicate plant, the *Entente Cordiale.*

For though the roots of that plant have struck down fairly deep during these years of the Great War, its leaves and blossoms need care, and all plants die without sun and water.

I saw a nasty " green fly " which I had often come across before, but never in this particular place,

though I must have passed close to it frequently. On the Place St Augustin, inscribed beneath the statue of Jeanne d'Arc, are these words: "Brûlée vive par les Anglais."

If this were a simple historical fact, we might regret the spirit which put on record for daily remembrance an act so hideous committed by a people in those days of gross superstition five hundred years ago, but we should have no right to protest. If, however, Jeanne d'Arc was, according to history, tried, condemned and burnt, by order of the Catholic Church under Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, her remorseless foe—though the English who handed their prisoner over to this evil priest and heartily concurred in the deed cannot be held guiltless—it is a gross misrepresentation of facts to say, "She was burnt alive by the English." Why not put, "Burnt alive by order of the Catholic Church?" and add, to show the evolution from which fortunately even the Churches are not immune, "Canonised by the same Church five hundred years later." But in the interests of truth as well as Cordial Understanding let us kill this mischievous "green fly" eating the leaves of the rose-bush whose health we desire.

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A true and permanent *Entente Cordiale* can only be achieved by "desiring more love and knowledge" of each other, not, "hereafter in a better world than this," but right now. For, if we let slip this propitious hour, who knows when another such will

come again. "Tout savoir c'est tout pardonner"—"c'est tout comprendre." To this end, however, a common speech is indispensable. How can we begin to *know* anything at all of each other when the majority of even so-called educated people, either in England or France, speak no language but their own with any ease. Perhaps the Channel Tunnel will help towards this desirable end; there is nothing like commercial relations for quickening speech—it is almost as powerful an inducement as love! But five years is a long time to wait. The plant needs water daily, lest it wither before the Tunnel is set going. And now is the moment when our men, home from the Front, are contributing their powerful co-operation. The French are no longer strangers to them, they have fought side by side with the *poilu* and he has won their unstinted admiration and praise. They "didn't know he was like that—such grit—such a sticker——" And French women—Mr Atkins has lived in the villages and often been touched by their kindness—"real kind those women were and wouldn't hear of being paid for it," I have heard again and again. Most of them have learnt a few sentences of French and taught an equal number of English words; but those who have seen the sufferings and the courage of the French people have learnt more than the language. The mother of an English Tommy who entered Lille with the victorious armies showed me a letter from her boy. Here is a short extract:

". . . I thank God He has spared me to be one of those to make these dear people free, for they will never forget us and we have a good name over it. I now realise that all our pain of leaving our loved ones and the hardships we have been through are all for a great cause, and if ever anything happens to me you should all be proud to think you have given me for such a cause. All you have read is not enough to tell you people at home of how the Huns have treated the people out here. I was talking to a woman and her daughter, they were in tears, and by jove I was mad when they told me how they treated them because they would not let the Square Heads do as they wished to them—a dear girl she is too, and I just thought of your being in her place, but thank God England has not been overrun by those pigs and never will be—thank God she is free. Keep well, dear, and soon the war will be over and then we shall all burst with excitement—French and English too—keep up heart! . . ."

Hundreds of thousands of Englishmen and of men from the great Dominions have come into close touch, have seen with their eyes and heard with their ears, what the French have gone through. Not all may have the fine sympathy and understanding of the boy who wrote this letter, but the greater number have had their hearts touched and their horizons immensely widened. "I just thought of you being in her place"—there is the crux of the whole matter.

Another incident in connection with Lille made an

unforgettable impression on our French friends. It was the happily-inspired act of the English General who, though arriving first, gave place to the Commander of the French army that he and his troops might be the first to enter the rescued city. Again and again I heard the appreciative comment: "Ah! mais ça c'etait un beau geste." The warm glow of that approval was not restricted to the English General himself, it radiated to the whole nation, and I have felt its pleasant rays even on as remote a figure as myself. So quickly do they respond to a gallant action, a sympathetic movement, our warm-hearted French friends.

Lille! The name recalled that artillery officer I met in the train in those dire days of stress in 1917. Happily he is now re-united to his wife and child, and that nightmare of French guns—his own gun—bringing death to his own beloved ones, is over for ever. But . . . who knows? The fate of the people in Lille does not bear thinking about during the Hun occupation. We read how one hundred women of all classes from Lille and Laon were taken off to Germany on the night of January 12th, 1918—a journey that lasted seventy hours under unspeakable conditions, a trumped up pretext of "reprisals," the reason alleged—and there endured such treatment as made a French Missionary from Africa write:

"I know many savage tribes. I know none that would do some of the things that have been done by the Germans in France."

Let us hope, however, that the poor artillery officer was spared more suffering, he had gone through so much of that worst kind of all—suspense and anxiety, and that his wife was among those women who flocked round the rescuing troops as they entered Lille, embracing and blessing them with tears and smiles of joy.

The statue of Lille on the Place de la Concorde has put off her crape and is garlanded with flowers. In her hand this restored daughter holds aloft the victorious flag of France, her Mother.

The Champs Élysées is a grand sight—a sight for the healing of heart wounds. "Cheeks that are white with weeping Allah paints red again." There is a new light in French eyes now. From the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde on either side of the wide avenue stand German guns. Oh yes, the big guns of the Boche are in Paris—miles and miles of them, but what a different entry they made from that planned by the All-Highest-War-Lord! Captives they stand, covered with their grotesque camouflage daubings, while the little street urchins of Paris make sport of them and ride on their dumb muzzles.

I saw no signs of big Bertha's outrages, except in that loved haunt of other days, the church of St Gervais, scene of the grim tragedy on Good Friday 1918. Half the church is boarded up. The destruction wrought by the huge obus from big Bertha is not yet repaired, and still the long black veils are being worn for the hundreds of inoffensive worshippers

who perished that day. A day, be it remembered, when the Boches had appealed to the Pope to intervene that they might be exempted from all attacks from the Allies by land or air on account of their own religious observances—a petition scrupulously respected by the guileless Allies. How the Boche chuckled! Nothing divides people so much as a different sense of humour. Poor Saint Gervais! disfigured—mutilated—like the disfigured, mutilated heroes still under repairs at the "Val de Grace." Though services are again held there she is unable to take her place as of old with her incomparable choir of the famous *chanteurs*.

Most churches in Paris it seemed to me were ringing marriage bells and vibrating to the sound of wedding marches every day in the week—so many had waited for June; May, and the season of Lent preceding it, not being considered propitious. At Ste Clotilde I sat and listened again to Cavaillé-Coll's wonderful organ, that "quasi-supernatural being," as M. d'Indy truly named it when it drew life from the inspired César Franck, as it pealed out joyous music for a young naval officer and his bride. Just the right sort of bride, pretty as a flower, tall and slender, with a little dark head crowned with orange blossoms, and a fine old lace veil which in no way hid "the sweetest eyes were ever seen" and the smiling happiness behind them. These two had waited for this wonderful day—*après la guerre*, and it had come—actually come at last. He had won safely through all those in-

credible dangers! No wonder these weddings have a radiance peculiarly their own—the brides rejoicing as though receiving their beloved back from the grave.

The spirit of César Franck must have been hovering very near that day, for after the ceremony, slowly the organ began to breathe out his divine music inspired by the Béatitude:

"Blessed are they that mourn, blessed! For they shall be comforted." These had mourned—they were comforted.

It was Franck's message to the bridal pair given out by the very organ on which it had been composed forty years before.

. . . . . .

My friends in Paris I found again as of old. Quite untouched by any atmospheric disturbances, or differences of opinion going on at Versailles. Politicians and Peacemakers may come and may go, but our old friendship flows on like the river, increasing in depth and volume as it makes for the sea. To have lived through the Great War side by side has woven still stronger ties between us, and now we share the blessing of Peace and rejoice in a common Victory.

In a little sky-high flat where, often in years gone by, I have sat and listened to a select group of distinguished musicians who were wont to meet once a week and "make music," literally "faire de la musique," there I sat again in my privileged little corner of the adjoining salon, on the evening of that

memorable day when Peace was signed in the Hall of Mirrors. And again those exquisite artists made music. "To-day," they said, "we will play the music of Peace."

In this category was included a joyous quartette of Mozart, and I thought of my poor little old lady of the green-shuttered house in Noyon, how she had insisted on claiming Mozart as a "good Frenchman." And here he was representing the music of Peace on the great Peace day.

A very undeniable Frenchman, however, was Ernest Chausson, whose Quarto, among the rare works that can never die, they played at my special request. And so, quite irrespective of nationality, the Peace music flowed on, bringing healing and strength to weary, war-worn spirits and heralding the dawn of a New Day.

"How much more suitable is music than cannon for announcing Peace to the world," said an old gentleman, a privileged guest like myself. "The sound of those salvos of guns, which rattled round Paris at five o'clock in the afternoon, is so inextricably interwoven with the air-raid that never is it possible to dissociate them from those little black specks of the Boche in the sky. The announcing of Peace by explosions of gun-powder! The good God did not send a thunderstorm on that first Christmas morning. He sent the Angels to make music announcing Peace on Earth."

But in spite of the guns Paris was good to see that

night, for without going mad she rejoiced, singing and dancing wherever the crowd was not too great to start a lively ball on the asphalte. Everyone carried a flag and musical instrument of some sort, and all walked together, old and young, with beaming faces. Torchlight processions promenaded the streets in every direction, and gorgeous illuminations made it look like a city in a fairy tale.

Monsieur Poilu was greatly to the fore. It was his night of honour, for without him where would the politicians and their famous Peace have been! *Honneur aux Poilus* written in great stars of light from the Galeries Lafayettes found an echo in every heart.

And arm in arm with smiling wives, mothers and sweethearts, sometimes a *petit gosse* perched on their shoulders, were the blind *poilus*. No faces more shining than theirs in all that throng, seeing the Vision of Peace with that sixth sense so often quickened into being by the loss of bodily sight, and rejoicing that they had survived for this Day of Days. In the street cafés British and American khaki sat side by side with *horizon bleu*, they at least will never forget the *Entente Cordiale* they felt that night, sharing at last—even as they had shared in past years sorrow and death and all the horrors of war—Victory and Peace.

THE END

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